

THOUGHTS

ON THE

COMMENCEMENT

OF A

NEW PARLIAMENT.

WITH

REMARKS on the LETTER

OF

The Right Hon. EDMUND BURKE

ON THE

REVOLUTION IN FRANCE.

[Price 2s. 6d.]

T H O U G H T S

ON THE

COMMEMORATION

OF A



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R i g h t H o n. E D M U N D B U R K E, on
t h e R E V O L U T I O N in F R A N C E.

By J O S E P H T O W E R S, L.L.D.

L O N D O N:

P R I N T E D F O R C H A R L E S D I L L Y, I N T H E P O U L T R Y.

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THOUGHTS

ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF A NEW PARLIAMENT.

FEW periods in the history of mankind have been more distinguished than the present, by great, important, and interesting events. The most signal, and the most unexpected revolutions have taken place. An ardent and enlightened zeal for the great interests of mankind has been manifested, in different parts of the globe, and has produced the most salutary consequences. It has been displayed even among those, who had long been enured to the galling chains of despotism, and who seemed

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to have almost totally forgotten their rights as men, and their claims as citizens.

AMONG these events, the late revolution in France is one of the most conspicuous and striking. The transition was so great, and so extraordinary, from such a despotic government as that which had long prevailed in that kingdom, to so free a constitution as that which is now established, that it could not but arrest the attention of all, who were not wholly regardless of the transactions of foreign nations, or of the great interests of mankind. It afforded a sublime pleasure to the friends of liberty, of virtue, of human happiness, to see a great nation shaking off its fetters, compelling its rulers to acknowledge the just claims of the people, and asserting the rights of men, in the noblest and the fullest manner.

FROM the high sentiments of liberty, which have appeared for some years past
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among French writers, there was much reason to hope, that some change, favourable to the people, would, by degrees, take place in the government of France. But no man expected such a revolution, as that which has actually been effected. I must at the same time remark, that, as an Englishman, I cannot but feel considerable pleasure at the reflection, that some of the eminent writers of my own country have greatly contributed to diffuse that spirit of freedom, which has lately been exhibited in different parts of Europe, as well as on the other side of the Atlantic. The French nation have had the generosity to acknowledge this; and much of that flame of liberty, which has characterized the Americans of the present age, was undoubtedly derived from the mother-country, and from that light and knowledge, which were communicated to the British colonies from the LOCKES and the SYDNEYS of England. But, unhappily, at a period when

English writers are illuminating the world, and contributing to its emancipation from tyranny, much of the ancient spirit of liberty appears in England itself to be evaporated, and we seem in this respect to be greatly degenerating from our ancestors. A spirit of court servility, and an implicit confidence in the minister, without any just grounds, have lately become so prevalent, that there is too great reason to apprehend, that we have lost much of that vigilance in the support of public freedom, which is essential to its preservation.

AT a period, when the most splendid scenes have been exhibited in France, and the noblest sentiments displayed among many of the virtuous and enlightened inhabitants of that kingdom, an Englishman, sincerely attached to the honour and to the interest of his country, cannot but be in a very high degree solicitous, that Great Britain may yet continue to preserve that
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honourable station, which she has long held among the nations of the earth ; and that she may still be distinguished, not only by her wealth, her extended commerce, and her love of literature, of science, and of arts, but by the freedom of her constitution, her aversion to every species of tyranny, and an unconquerable resolution to assert and to maintain the rights of human nature.

I REJOICE in the freedom of FRANCE ; I rejoice, that so great and respectable a nation has recovered its liberties ; I hope, that they will be confirmed in the fullest manner ; and that no untoward events, no fickleness of the people, nor any iniquitous interposition of foreign powers, will in any degree impede and retard their complete establishment. But I wish, at the same time, that GREAT BRITAIN may still continue free ; that its inhabitants may not degenerate from the virtues of their ancestors ; that our political constitution may be improved ;

improved ; and that the wisest and best measures may be adopted for its security and permanence.

IT is from reflexions and sentiments like these, that I have been led to view, with some degree of solicitude, the Commencement of the Seventeenth Parliament of Great Britain. At the same time, I am willing to cherish the hope, that notwithstanding some strong symptoms of political degeneracy, which have lately been too manifest among us, yet that there may still be found sufficient energy, spirit, and virtue, among the people and the parliament, not only to maintain our antient rights, but to reform the defects in our constitution, and still farther to advance the freedom, and the felicity of our country.

WHEN I review the transactions of the last parliament, I am very far from finding it entitled to that applause, which has
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sometimes been bestowed upon it; and it will give me great pleasure, when sufficient evidence is afforded to the public, that the new representatives of the people have more virtue than their predecessors, and that they are sincerely desirous of doing, not merely their own business, or that of the minister, but the business of the nation, and advancing its real interests. At the Commencement of a New Parliament, it must be highly proper for the members of it seriously to consider, in what manner they shall best perform their duty to their constituents, and by what means they may render the most essential services to their country. It may also reasonably be presumed, that such of the members of it as are really well-disposed, and who entered into parliament, not merely for their own private ends, but for the service of the public, will receive with candour, and with such attention as they may deserve, any hints that may appear

to be calculated for the promotion of these great and important ends, from whatever quarter they may come.

IN the transactions of the last Parliament, the debates and proceedings relative to the appointment of a REGENCY, may be considered as among the most important. But in speaking on this subject, I must confess, that I was one of those who were not satisfied with the conduct of either party. It was too manifest, that the object of the two great leading parties was much more the acquisition of power, than any real attachment to the welfare of the Nation, or to the principles of the Constitution. Indeed, in the course of the debates concerning the Regency, we heard much of the King's party, of the Queen's party, and of the Prince of Wales's party; but no man heard any thing of the party of the People. Nor were the just claims of the People ever fairly,

fairly, fully, and unequivocally asserted, in either house, during the course of the debates upon the subject.

OF Mr. Pitt's questions respecting the regency, which were voted by the parliament, that which asserted the right of parliament, as the representatives of the people, to appoint a regency, I entirely approved. The doctrine that the prince of Wales was to succeed of course to the regency, or that the parliament were to be considered merely as a court in which his right was to be recognized, appeared to me to be totally adverse to all the great principles of the constitution. But the appointment of a commission, under the great seal, to give the royal assent to a regency bill, I could view in no other light than as a miserable fiction, invented for the occasion, in order to avoid the appearance of making the executive power originate, where it ought ever to originate, from the authority of

the people. The establishment also that was to have been made, in case a regency had taken place, was to have been rendered, by the minister's plan, unnecessarily expensive to the nation, and was obviously calculated for the maintenance of his own influence and power.

AMONG the censurable transactions of the last Parliament, the exorbitant extension of the EXCISE is entitled to particular attention. It ought to have excited a greater national alarm, and a more vigorous and general opposition, than were produced by it. Without speaking of the act for excising wine, which was justly liable to very strong objections, I shall only observe, that Mr. Pitt's Tobacco Bill was at least as pernicious, and as unconstitutional, as that which had nearly, and very deservedly, driven Walpole from the helm of power. It is impossible for any impartial man to read this voluminous act, which
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consists of more than one hundred and sixty clauses, and many of the regulations of which are highly oppressive, without a full conviction, that it is an act which ought never to have taken place in a free country. The advocates for such laws as these are apt to urge, in their vindication, the necessities of the state ; but it does not follow, that because money is wanted by the government, that therefore little regard is to be paid to the principles of the constitution. No man, who will reflect coolly and impartially upon the subject, can possibly doubt, but that taxes, and efficient taxes, may be raised by other and more constitutional modes of taxation. But there will be an end to the liberties of England, if the people suffer their rights to be repeatedly and wantonly invaded, under the pretence of raising a revenue. Whatever may be the wants of government, it is the duty of the representatives of the people to oppose every bill that is calculated to undermine

the public liberty. As to the laws of excise, the permanency of this mode of taxation, which has a tendency to render the crown less dependent on the parliament; the power that it gives to officers of the crown to enter men's houses at their own pleasure, and without any warrant from a civil magistrate; the great increase which it occasions of revenue officers appointed by the crown, and acting under its influence; the deprivation of the subject, in excise causes, of the right of trial by jury; these, and various other circumstances, render the excise highly dangerous, and very inconsistent with the genius of a free nation. Indeed, I am fully convinced, that whenever the great body of the people of this country shall be sufficiently enlightened upon the subject, they will say, with a firm and decided tone, We will have no farther Extension of the Excise. Perhaps few instances have occurred, in the history of ministers and of parliaments, of greater

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ministerial arrogance, and ministerial obstinacy, than were exhibited in carrying the late Tobacco Bill through the two houses, in opposition to the strongest and the fullest evidence of the mischievous tendency of the act, which appears not only to be highly pernicious and dangerous in a constitutional light, but manifestly calculated to diminish the tobacco trade of the country, and eventually to injure the national revenue.

INDEPENDENTLY of the general pernicious tendency of the excise, I have observed, both in the last and preceding Parliaments, that, in framing new revenue laws, a proper attention has not been paid to the convenience and accommodation of the subject, nor sufficient pains taken to prevent such laws from being more burthen some to the people than necessary. The subject has been left too much to the mercy of the ministers of the crown, and was
not

not protected, as he ought to have been, by the national representatives. When a new revenue bill was brought in, the fabrication of it, and the clauses of which it was composed, were left too much to the discretion of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or perhaps to his secretary; and to them the persons interested often found it necessary to apply, in order to obtain some mitigation, or alteration, of any new imposition. But the merchants and traders of this country have not that security which they ought to have, if, when a new law is framing, which may materially affect their interests, they are obliged to have recourse, not to Parliament, or to a Committee of Parliament, but to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Whenever this is the case, it is manifest, that the representatives of the people do not discharge their duty to their constituents. But a due attention ought to be paid to the accommodation of the subject, both by administration and by parliament,

ment. Taxes are levied for the benefit of the community at large; and they ought to be levied in that manner which is least burthenfome to the fubject. The idea that nothing is to be attended to but the revenue, and that little regard is to be paid to the convenience of the people, is an idea that can never enter the head of any minifter of a truly great and liberal mind.

THE COMMUTATION ACT is one of thofe meafures, for which great applaufe has been given to the prefent Chancellor of the Exchequer. The fuppreffion of smuggling was certainly a very defirable object; but I do not think that the mode by which it was effected, or attempted to be effected, is entitled to much commendation. A tax that tends to exclude light and air from ordinary habitations, that is calculated to leffen the healthfulnefs and the beauty of the edifices of a country, is fubftantially a bad tax; and the revenue raifed by

by it is not a compensation for the evil. The same money might undoubtedly be levied under some other denomination, and with less injury to the public.

IN the last, as well as in preceding parliaments, the minister of the crown was generally permitted to take the lead, even apparently, in a much greater degree than could be approved, by those who had adopted correct ideas of the constitution. The father of the present minister is reported to have said in the house of commons, that there was a certain modesty in that house, which did not easily suffer itself to contradict a minister; and I observed in the last house of commons, that it seemed to be thought very improper to commence any business of importance, unless the minister were present. Indeed, the manner in which the house often waited for his appearance, as if they could do nothing but under his direction, seemed to me to be

be very unfuitable to the dignity of a British House of Commons. I hope, that the honour of the house, and of the nation, will be more attended to in the present Parliament; and that the representatives of the people will be of opinion, that they have a right, and that it is their duty, to do the business of the public, whether the minister of the crown chooses to be in his place, or not; and that they will be much more inclined to receive the instructions of their constituents, than to attend to the dictates of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

ONE circumstance, which deserves attention in our late Parliaments, and especially the last, is the extension of the sessions to so late a season of the year, that the generality of the members have wholly quitted the business of the house, long before the close of the session, in order to retire to their seats in the country. The fifth session of the last Parliament was not closed

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till the 11th of July, and the sixth not till the 11th of August. But this extension of the session to so late a period, though in a constitutional view it may, unless in a case of real emergency, be regarded as a considerable evil, is a great advantage to a minister who wishes to carry any improper bills through the two houses. As most of the independent members have then ceased to give their attendance, the minister has an opportunity of carrying his most obnoxious measures, in thin houses, with much more facility, than if the session were closed at an earlier period of the year. This is probably the real cause of the session being extended so far into the summer; for otherwise, it would certainly be more convenient for the members, and better for the public, that the Parliament should assemble at the beginning of November, and then enter upon business, than have the session extended to July or August. But placemen and pensioners are obliged to attend

attend even in the dog-days ; and if the more independent members are in a remote part of the country, or too far from the metropolis to attend the Parliament, the business of the minister will not be neglected, whatever may become of the business of the public. Mr. Pitt's first Tobacco bill was passed in August, 1789. Indeed, though the sessions of Parliament have lately been carried so far into the year, so little attention has sometimes been paid to the real interest of the nation, that the people have had reason to rejoice when the Parliament broke up ; because no additional impositions could be laid upon the public, nor any new laws passed to the injury of the constitution, till the commencement of another session.

OF the various objects, which seem proper to engage the attention of a new Parliament, one of the most important is,
 a REFORM OF THE REPRESENTATION

of the people in the house of commons. Mr. Pitt once made strong professions of great zeal for such a reform. But these professions are now forgotten, and this zeal seems no longer to have any existence. Indeed, the plan of a parliamentary reform, which was proposed by Mr. Pitt, never appeared to me to be a good one; and that it was not so, I know to have been the opinion of many, who had thought much upon the subject. But whatever the merits of his plan might be, he seems now to have totally abandoned it. When a motion was made by Mr. Flood, in the last session of the last Parliament, for
 “ leave to bring in a bill to amend the pre-
 “ sent representation of the people in the
 “ house of commons,” Mr. Pitt manifested an extreme dislike to any discussion of the subject, and even applauded some of the most contemptible sophistry that was ever delivered in parliament, which was then advanced with a view of convincing those
 members,

members, who could not distinguish between the grossest fallacies and sound reasoning, that there was no occasion for any reform whatever.

WHEN nine tenths of the people of this country have no votes in the elections of members of Parliament, when so great a part of the nation are constantly taxed without being represented, and obliged to obey laws to which they have never assented, it is in the highest degree absurd to pretend, that the representation is not inadequate, or that a reform is not necessary. But the minister is at present, it seems, of opinion, that it is not yet the proper time; and we have abundant reason to believe, that it never will be the proper time, till a great part of the people shall have spirit and understanding enough to demand, as their undoubted, their unquestionable right, a more just and equal representation in Parliament. Whenever that period shall arrive,

rive, the minister, whoever he be, however reluctantly, will find that it is a proper time. In the mean while, the friends of this great, this important, this necessary renovation of the constitution, should adopt every proper measure for effectuating such a reform; and should never lose sight of this great object, from a full conviction, that a reform of Parliament is essential to the security, and to the establishment of British freedom. But besides a reform in the representation, the septennial act, which was originally a flagrant violation of the rights of the people, ought also to be repealed. If the elections of members of Parliament were more frequent, the sentiments of the people would undoubtedly be more attended to, both by their representatives, and by the minister.

AMONG other violations of the principles of the constitution, and of those of justice and humanity, under which a part

of the people of this country sometimes labour, and which it would be highly proper for a new Parliament to take into consideration, one is, the practice of IMPRESSING SEAMEN. This assumed power, in its own nature, and from the manner in which it is exercised, is totally repugnant to every idea of liberty and justice; nor can any principles of national policy be urged, which, when examined, will amount to a justification of this outrage on humanity. Such, indeed, is the enormity of the practice, that it would, I believe, be found, if the matter were fairly and fully investigated, that a much greater degree of violence, injustice, and oppression, have been exercised upon British subjects, in consequence of the press-warrants lately issued by the Lords of the Admiralty, than have been suffered from the Spaniards by any subjects of the British government, in those transactions which have been expected to give rise to a war between the two nations.

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If this be the fact, and I believe that an accurate examination would demonstrate it to be so, some other mode of manning our navy ought surely to be adopted. It has been very dishonourable to preceding Parliaments, that no more attention was paid to those plans, which have been proposed for manning the fleet, without having recourse to the violent and unconstitutional mode of impressing. But I hope, that the humanity and justice of the present Parliament will adopt proper methods for putting a stop to this most indefensible practice. Besides the cruelty with which impressing is attended, it is well known to be a very expensive service to the nation; and from all the information which I have been able to collect upon the subject, there is no reason to doubt, but that methods might be adopted, by which the fleet might be better manned, with equal expedition, and probably without more expence to the nation, than by the present practice of impressing.

pressing. But if such methods should be found more expensive, the expence ought to be submitted to, rather than suffer a practice to continue, which is an indelible reproach to a free country.

IN the present situation of Great Britain, oppressed with an immense debt, and with heavy taxes, almost without number, it certainly should be one of the prime objects of a wise administration, carefully to avoid all unnecessary wars. I do not mean, that the nation should be tamely insulted, or not assert, on every proper occasion, its just rights ; but that wars should not hastily be engaged in, for questions of mere punctilio ; that in the management of disputes with foreign nations, some moderation should be observed ; and that no alliances should be entered into, in Germany or elsewhere, that have a natural tendency to involve us in a continental war. In this view, I consider the late Prussian treaty as in a

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very high degree reprehensible. In the treaty of defensive alliance between the King of Great Britain and the King of Prussia, concluded at Berlin on the 13th of August, 1788, are the following stipulations : “ The two high contracting parties
 “ shall always act in concert for the main-
 “ tenance of peace and tranquillity ; and
 “ in case either of them should be threa-
 “ tened with a hostile attack by any power
 “ whatever, the other shall employ, with-
 “ out delay, his most efficacious good of-
 “ fices for preventing hostilities, for pro-
 “ curing satisfaction to the injured party,
 “ and for effecting an accommodation in
 “ a conciliatory manner. But if these
 “ good offices should not have the desired
 “ effect, in the space of two months, and
 “ either of the two high contracting par-
 “ ties should be hostilely attacked, mo-
 “ lested, or disturbed, in *any of his domi-*
 “ *nions, rights, possessions, or interests, or*
 “ *in any manner whatever, by sea or by*
 “ *land,*

“ *land, by any European power, the other*
 “ *contracting party engages to succour his*
 “ *ally, without delay, in order to main-*
 “ *tain each other reciprocally in the posses-*
 “ *sion of all the dominions, territories, towns,*
 “ *and places, which belonged to them before*
 “ *the commencement of such hostilities.*” It
 would, perhaps, not be very easy to con-
 trive a treaty, that should be better calcu-
 lated to involve Great Britain in an unne-
 cessary war, than that in which these stipu-
 lations are contained. What can Prussia
 do for England, that can be any compen-
 sation for the hazard of being embroiled in
 a war, whenever any of the territories of
 the king of Prussia, so surrounded, and
 some of which have been obtained by such
 questionable means, shall be attacked by
 any foreign power? That a nation like
 that of England, so well able by its own
 strength to defend all its own possessions,
 and so differently situated from the king-

dom of Prussia, should have patiently and silently acquiesced in such a treaty, as that concluded at Berlin in 1788, is truly astonishing. A close connexion with a military and a despotic monarch, like that of Prussia, so circumstanced as to be always in danger of a war, cannot be beneficial to a commercial nation like Great Britain, which has little real occasion to interfere in any of the disputes upon the continent. Indeed, no treaty concluded with Prussia has ever been beneficial to Great Britain; nor do I believe that any such treaty ever will be beneficial.

THE real motive for concluding the Prussian treaty, besides a view to supporting the late measures respecting Holland, seems to have been an attention to the preservation of the electorate of Hanover; which, if a war should take place, may possibly be attacked; and which a king of Prussia, if
his

his own dominions are not in too much danger, may have it in his power to defend. The electorate of Hanover has been considered, in some degree, as the private patrimony of the King; and, therefore, British ministers have found it beneficial to themselves, and that it tended to keep them in favour and in power, to pay a particular attention to the real or supposed interests of that electorate, in order to gratify the private views or attachments of their royal master.

SOMETHING of this kind was foreseen as probable, before the accession of the present family; and, therefore, in an act passed in the twelfth year of the reign of king William, entitled, " An act for the farther limitation of the crown, and better securing the rights and liberties of the subject," is the following clause: " That in case the crown and imperial dignity of this realm shall hereafter come to any person,

“ person, not being a native of the king-
 “ dom of England, this nation be not
 “ obliged to engage in any war for the
 “ defence of any dominions or territories
 “ which do not belong to the crown
 “ of England, without the consent of
 “ parliament *.” By the spirit of this act it
 was undoubtedly intended, that if the Elec-
 tor of Hanover should succeed to the throne
 of England, no treaties should be entered
 into with a view to the safety of any of the
 dominions of the King, as Elector of Ha-
 nover, which might eventually involve
 England in an unnecessary war. But not-
 withstanding this act, treaties have been
 repeatedly made, since the accession of the
 present family, with a view to the elec-
 torate of Hanover, which have been ex-
 tremely pernicious and expensive to this
 country.

THE late king of Prussia, who had him-
 self received enormous sums from England,

* Cay's Edition of the Statutes, vol. II. p. 355.

under

under the denomination of subsidies, takes notice, in one of the prefaces to his *Histoire de mon Temps*, of the profusion with which English guineas had been squandered in continental connexions * ; and he asserts, in another place, that his uncle, George II. “ governed England according to the interests of his Electorate †.” Count Algarotti also, speaking of that prince, says, “ What the King has most at heart is certainly his electorate of Hanover. This is the compass that has uniformly guided the wars of England, since the elevation of the House of Brunswick to the throne of that kingdom ; and the preservation of this electorate will STILL CONTINUE to be the ruling principle ‡.” It would have been better for this country, and pro-

* This preface was published in the *Mémoire Historique*, &c. read by count Hertzberg to the royal academy at Berlin, on the 25th of January, 1787, and printed in that city the same year.

† Oeuvres Posthumes, tom. I. p. 48. edit. Berlin, 1788.

‡ Letters Military and Political, p. 101. second edit.

bably better for the electorate of Hanover, if, on the accession of George I. to the throne of England, the electorate had been resigned to one of the younger branches of the family. A stipulation of this kind would have been highly proper in the act of settlement.

IN justification of the late Prussian treaty, the preservation of the balance of power in Europe will probably be urged. But I confess, that to me this appears to be nothing but a mere pretence; though it is not to be wondered at, that the fabricators of such a treaty should have recourse to such a pretence, when nothing more solid can be alleged in its justification. The balance of Europe is often a popular topic; but much that is said upon this subject is very little founded upon any due consideration of the real state of things. The state of Europe is so much changed from what it was some years since, that reasonings relative

tive to the balance of Europe, which might have some weight fifty years ago, are now totally inapplicable. The present king of Sweden has published a book, in which he has endeavoured to shew, that the political balance of Europe is in great danger from the power of Russia; he has since concluded a treaty with the empress of Russia; and will probably now employ his industry in settling the balance of Europe, with as much justice and impartiality, as he has already settled the liberties of his own subjects. The late king of Prussia, in a letter to the marquis D'Argens, speaks of the balance of Europe in terms of ridicule; and observes, that " of this disorderly balance " Mr. Pitt (lord Chatham) had not been " able to find the centre of gravity *." Indeed, the affairs of Europe are now so circumstanced, that it is difficult for the acutest politician to determine, on what side the

* *Oeuvres Posthumes*, tome X. p. 316.

balance is likely to preponderate. This, however, we may certainly determine, that a nation deeply involved in debt, and burthened with heavy taxes, as Great Britain now is, should engage in no war to which it is not compelled by necessity, or in any cases but those in which its interests are very essentially concerned.

As war may justly be considered as one of the greatest of human calamities, it must be highly rational for any nation seriously to consider, before the commencement of hostilities, whether they have a sufficient reason to engage in war, whether their cause be founded upon justice, and whether they are likely to gain any important advantages, if the contest be finally decided in their favour. But, unfortunately, those to whom it is chiefly left to determine, whether a war shall, or shall not take place, are the least sufferers by it; and, perhaps, even derive from it a considerable

additional degree of power and influence. This consideration may lead a speculative man sometimes to inquire, whether the power of making war and peace be not too great and important in its nature, to be so much confided to the discretion of the minister, and so entirely at the pleasure of the crown. It is, indeed, understood, that the power which the parliament possesses of withholding supplies is a sufficient check upon the ministers, and upon the crown; but it should be remembered, that if war be declared, the nation is committed; and though the parliament may withhold supplies, it may be scarcely possible to return to peace, and yet preserve the honour of the nation. Indeed, the truth is, that not only ministers of state, but the people of this country have long been too fond of war. Many individuals derive advantage from it; but the great body of the people must always be sufferers by it; and it is astonishing that a nation, so overwhelmed with debts and

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taxes,

taxes, should not be more convinced of the pernicious consequences of war, that they should not be more deeply sensible of the calamities with which it is attended, and be less forward to engage in it.

ONE great evil which attends the power of making war and peace, and concluding treaties, being wholly vested in the ministers of the crown, is, that wars may be commenced, and treaties concluded, on maxims very inconsistent with the genius of a free people, and on principles totally repugnant to the real interests of the nation. It must be very unnatural in the inhabitants of a country, who have distinguished themselves by their ardent love of liberty, to engage in any wars to compel another nation to an implicit submission to the authority of their prince or sovereign, and to countenance or conclude any treaties of which this is the object. But there may be periods, when such a conduct, however inconsistent

consistent with the wishes and the interests of the people of England, may be very congenial to the views of the court of England. It would certainly be more safe, honourable, and advantageous to the nation; that no regular war should be commenced, nor any treaty concluded, but by the authority of parliament. A power might be granted to the crown, of employing the forces of the nation in its defence, in case of any immediate hostile attack; though neither the minister, nor the council, were invested with the power of issuing a formal declaration of war, unless by the sanction and authority of parliament.

MUCH credit has been given to the present chancellor of the exchequer for his conduct respecting Holland; but, as it appears to me, with very little reason. I mean not here to enter into a minute discussion of the subject; but I shall take the liberty of observing, that it is my opinion, in which I know I am not singular, that the conduct
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of Great Britain respecting Holland, in the disputes between the republic, or a great part of the republic, and the stadtholder, was extremely unjust and indefensible; and it will, I apprehend, be finally found to have been impolitic. There are opinions which obtain for a time, and which even become popular, and which afterwards are for ever abandoned: such, I think, will be the event, respecting those favourable sentiments which have been entertained by many, of that mode of interference which was adopted by Great Britain, in the disputes that subsisted between a considerable part of the Dutch nation and the stadtholder.

THAT there were great defects in the constitution of the Dutch government, I readily admit; the government of the republic of Holland was too aristocratical; but regular and proper measures were taking by the Dutch patriots for the improvement

ment of their constitution ; and the beneficial effects of these measures have been prevented by the interference of Prussia and of Great Britain. Freedom is not now enjoyed in Holland. That the liberties of the Dutch nation should, in any degree, have been lessened, by the interposition, or the assistance, of Great Britain, I consider as highly dishonourable to my country. But, that this is the fact, will be doubted by no man, who shall impartially investigate the subject. Whatever might have been the errors, whatever the inconsistencies in the constitution of Holland, the disputes respecting the internal government of that republic should not have been adjusted by Prussian troops ; and no interposition in this case could have been honourable to Great Britain, but that which should have given the Dutch nation a fair and full opportunity of establishing that mode of government, which was thought
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by themselves to be most conducive to their real interests.

It has been supposed by many, that maxims of policy were a sufficient apology for our conduct respecting Holland. But no maxims of policy can justify transactions that are flagrantly unjust; and I believe that the interests of nations, as well as of individuals, would eventually be best promoted by an adherence to the rules of justice. Whatever may be the politics of the stadtholder's court; whatever may be the private attachments of the prince of Orange and the king of England, from their consanguinity; there is no reason to believe, that any friendship is established between the British and the Dutch nations; and, if a war should take place, we shall probably derive little effectual assistance from the navy of Holland.

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As the foreign politics of Mr. Pitt do not appear to be entitled to much commendation, neither do I think that he has any just claim to applause for his conduct respecting the internal government of this country. His administration has, indeed, been very far from being favourable to the interests of public liberty; and on various occasions he has evinced, that he has little attachment to its principles. When a motion was made, by Mr. Powis, in 1786, in behalf of the inhabitants of Quebec, for leave to bring in a bill to amend the Quebec act, and to render the government of that colony more consonant to the principles of the English constitution, the motion was strenuously opposed by Mr. Pitt. But the same year a new and very pernicious clause being introduced into the mutiny-bill, by which a greater number of persons than formerly were subjected to military law, that clause found in Mr. Pitt a defender, and was accordingly carried. The elo-

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quence of the chancellor of the exchequer was also very zealously employed, in 1787, in support of the bill for farming the tax on post horses*, which was accordingly passed into a law, though extremely adverse to the principles of the English constitution.

WHEN a bill was brought into parliament by Mr. Marham, "for securing the freedom of election, by excluding persons holding places in the navy and the ordnance from voting for members of parliament," it was very vehemently opposed by Mr. Pitt, who was of opinion, that though the influence of the crown, before he came into power, was too great, and had been very properly diminished, yet that there was now no occasion for any fresh diminution. The influence now, we may presume, had passed into very good and

* Debrett's Parliamentary Register, vol. XXII, p. 190, 191, 198.

safe hands, and there could be no reason for any farther doubt or distrust upon the subject. It was in 1786, that Mr. Pitt brought in his bill for subjecting wine to the laws of excise; and on that occasion he opposed a motion which was made by Mr. Beaufoy, and which would have made the act somewhat less pernicious, "for giving to the subject, in all cases of an information exhibited in pursuance of the bill, an optional right of being tried by a jury of his peers †." But this would have been too great a compliment to the principles of liberty, and to the spirit of the constitution. The arguments employed by Mr. Pitt against the clause were remarkably sophistical; but the house were too complaisant to consider any arguments of the minister in that light, and the clause was accordingly rejected.

† Debrett's Parliamentary Register, vol. XX. p. 335.
 &c.

THAT the present chancellor of the exchequer possesses eminent abilities cannot reasonably be questioned; but that these abilities have been much employed for the benefit of his country, I can perceive but very little evidence. The bulk of mankind are too apt to be deceived by specious appearances. A man may have acquired a habit of speaking plausibly, and even eloquently in parliament, and be able to defend his measures with great dexterity, and yet be a very bad minister of state. It might have been a circumstance fortunate for Mr. Pitt's future reputation, and probably much happier for his country, if he had continued longer out of office, and had had time to acquire a more correct knowledge of the principles of the English constitution, and a more sincere attachment to it, than he appears hitherto to have attained. He has some of the faults of his illustrious father, but I do not find that he possesses his virtues. He has shewn the
same

same inclination to be in office, and the same zeal for German continental connexions, when that zeal was favourable to a continuance in power; but we seek in vain for that energetic eloquence, for that generous enthusiasm, in support of the rights of men, which were repeatedly displayed by the earl of Chatham.

THE great and implicit confidence, which a considerable part of the nation seem, for some time past, to have had in Mr. Pitt, appears to me to have been totally destitute of any solid foundation. In saying this, I do not mean to speak the language of any particular party; I am of no party, I never was of any party, but that of Freedom, and of my Country. But I think, that there has been much national delusion, so far as it has been national, in the almost unbounded confidence that has been placed in the present chancellor of the exchequer. Several circumstances, however,

ever, have greatly contributed to this partiality in his favour. He derived no inconsiderable degree of lustre from the splendour of his father's character; and he appeared in parliament, at an early age, with great advantage. Before he came into power, he also exhibited very patriotic sentiments; and when he entered into office, an high degree of credit was given him on account of his youth, and the supposed purity of his intentions; though that species of faith, it may be presumed, is now considerably lessened. It was, indeed, certainly not natural to expect, in so young a man as Mr. Pitt, all the art and duplicity of an old and a practised minister. But his inexperienced youth was not without great and important assistance. In the science of ministerial management, and ministerial manœuvres, he has undoubtedly derived very signal advantages from the sagacious counsels of his tried and approved friends, Mr. Charles Jenkinson, now lord Hawkesbury, and

and Mr. Henry Dundas, two gentlemen whose political talents and merits have been long well known to the public.

MUCH has been said relative to the prosperous state, in which the nation is supposed to have been during the administration of Mr. Pitt. But it was not sufficiently considered, that this has been chiefly the consequence of the change from war to peace, which, by occasioning an immense alteration in the public expences, must necessarily greatly improve the situation of the nation: and this would naturally have been the case, whoever had been minister. In truth, the fact appears to be, that whatever prosperous circumstances the nation may be now in, are the result of the transition from war to peace, of the activity and industry of the people, the energy of the English character, the fertility of our soil, our extensive commerce, our great
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national resources, and the general excellency of our laws and constitution; and are, so far as I can discern, derived in no manner whatever from any measures that have originated in the wisdom, or in the virtue of Mr. Pitt. And as to his views and conduct respecting general freedom, the terms in which he has spoken of the French revolution, his enormous extension of the excise, his manner of treating the late motion for a reform in the representation of the people in the house of commons, together with the sentiments expressed by him on the application to parliament for a repeal of the Test and Corporation acts, appear to me to afford, when united, evidence of too decisive a nature, that he is not a sincere friend to the interests either of civil or of religious liberty; and that he is not a minister in whom the people, in any great question respecting the rights of men, can place any rational dependance.

BESIDES the circumstances that I have already mentioned, which have been favourable to Mr. Pitt's reputation, some other incidents, in which he had no concern whatever, have accidentally been the means of leading many persons to have an unreasonable confidence in his administration. The revolution in France, and the commotions in Holland and in Flanders, naturally induced many foreigners to place large sums in the English funds; and thus these events greatly contributed to raise the price of stocks. These transactions were certainly not brought about by Mr. Pitt, nor had he the least merit in them: but they had a great tendency towards raising his reputation among the stockholders. It is, indeed, one of the great evils attendant on the national debt, that it causes a considerable number of persons in this country to be inclined to support any minister, however censurable and unconstitutional may be his measures, if they suppose them calculated to keep up

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the price of stocks, and to secure, though only for a short time, the advantages which they conceive themselves to derive from the funds.

THE national revenue has lately been repeatedly represented to be in a state highly prosperous, and the merit of this has been chiefly attributed to the measures of Mr. Pitt. How far the national revenue is in a prosperous state, I shall not take upon me to decide; but I must observe, that, considering the great number of new taxes that have been laid, in a time of peace, it can be no wonder, that the public revenue should be, at least apparently, in a situation somewhat prosperous. But if the revenue be increased, the people must have severely felt such numerous and oppressive taxes; and every augmentation of immediate revenue by such means is far from being a national advantage. There is much reason to believe, that some of the new regulations respecting
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the revenue have been formed upon very narrow and contracted views, calculated to lessen various branches of trade, to discourage men of property from carrying on several valuable manufactures, and eventually to decrease both the national revenue and commerce. And when we are told of the present prosperous state of the revenue, one circumstance should be at least remembered, which I apprehend to be a most undoubted fact, that such heavy and oppressive taxes have never been laid, during a time of profound peace, by any minister in this country, from the time of William Rufus to the present hour, as have been imposed during the administration of Mr. Pitt.

It was highly dishonourable to the last house of commons, and must ever be recorded to its dishonour, while any impartial history of it shall remain, that so great a number of its members voted against a

repeal of the Test and Corporation acts. I
 blush for the honour of my country, when
 I reflect, that at the close of the eighteenth
 century, when the national assembly of
 France has solemnly declared, that "all ci-
 "tizens being equal in the eye of the law,
 "are equally eligible to all honours, places,
 "and employments, according to their dif-
 "ferent abilities, without any other dis-
 "tinction than that created by their virtues
 "and talents;" that, at such a period, such
 laws should be thought necessary or proper
 in Great Britain as the Test and Corpora-
 tion acts. It is a just subject of surprize,
 that so large a part of that nation which
 has produced BACON, LOCKE, and NEW-
 TON, should yet be so unenlightened. To
 suppose that a particular mode of receiving
 the sacrament, or adopting any dogmas of
 artificial theology, can be an indispensable
 requisite for qualifying a man to hold any
 civil office in the community to which he
 belongs, is one of those Gothic absurdities,
 which

which are suited only to the ages of ignorance and barbarism. There is no other method, therefore, of retrieving the honour of the nation, but by repealing these laws, and some others of a similar nature, which at present disgrace our statute books, and which are equally hostile to the interests of truth and reason, and to the common rights of mankind.

AMONG other important objects, which would be proper to engage the attention of a new parliament, one is, A REVISION OF THE PENAL LAWS. That our capital punishments are too numerous, and that punishments are often not properly proportioned to the nature of offences, and to the degrees of guilt, can be doubted by no man of equity or humanity, by whom the subject shall be investigated. Indeed, many of our penal statutes, from their sanguinary nature, are certainly in a very high degree dishonourable to the country. In 1787, a
motion

motion was made by Mr. Minchin, for leave to bring in a bill, to appoint commissioners to examine into the state of all the penal laws now in force in the kingdom, and to report their opinion thereon to the house of commons. But this very just and proper motion was opposed by Mr. Pitt. Unfortunately, there is a very mischievous species of pride, by which ministers of state appear sometimes to be actuated, which leads them to oppose any attempts that are made to introduce any new kind of reformation, or any new regulations, though manifestly beneficial to the public, and even though they should not immediately interfere with the views of government, merely because such measures, or plans of reform, did not originate with themselves. This is one of the evils resulting from that extreme complaisance to ministers of state, and profound deference to their opinions, by which our late parliaments have been too much distinguished.

OF the various modes of raising money for the service of government, which have been much practised for some years past, one is that of LOTTERIES. The pernicious effects of this mode of raising money have been repeatedly pointed out, and are so generally acknowledged, that scarcely any man entertains the least doubt upon the subject. But notwithstanding this, lotteries continue to be supported by those in administration; which could not be the case, if the welfare of the people were really the object of those to whom the powers of government are entrusted. As I am speaking of the conduct of persons in administration, I shall here also remark, that at a period when the French nation are abolishing all titles, our ministers for some time past have been acting as if they supposed that one of the most important and useful offices of government was to make new lords. A strong representation from parliament to the crown, on the great increase of the peerage

peerage during the present reign, would, I apprehend, be a very just and seasonable measure.

ANOTHER object, which might be proper to engage the attention of parliament, is the present state of THE SILVER AND THE COPPER COINAGE, which is a disgrace to the nation. I know that this is considered as the business of government; but I know, at the same time, that it is the business of parliament to see that the executive officers of government discharge their duty to the public. It is said, that considerable difficulties would attend the adjustment of such a new silver coinage, as should come into general circulation. Of this I am not insensible; but these difficulties are no reason why nothing should have been done, in a matter of such importance, at least nothing that has been effectual, during the whole of so long a reign as the present.

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THE new act, passed in 1789, by which additional stamp duties were laid on newspapers and advertisements, was not favourable to the liberty of the press, nor was it so intended. Besides the additional revenue from the increase of the stamp-duties, the avowed object was, to secure the payment of the stamp-duties; but the real design seems to have been, to put newspaper printers, and the proprietors of newspapers, more in the power of the commissioners of the stamp-duties, and of the government, than they were before, and to render prosecutions of proprietors of newspapers, as well as of printers, if it should be thought expedient by government, more practicable. This is done by the clause by which it is enacted, that “ from and after
 “ the first day of August, 1789, no printer
 “ or publisher of any news-paper now printed or published, or which may hereafter
 “ be printed or published, in which any advertisements, liable to the several duties by

" this or any former act or acts imposed, shall
 " be inserted, shall receive from the said
 " commissioners, or any person or persons
 " employed by them, any stamped paper
 " for printing any such intelligence or oc-
 " currence thereon, until the proprietor or
 " proprietors interested in the said paper, or
 " *such and so many of the said proprietors as*
 " *are, in the judgment of the said commissioners,*
 " or any three or more of them, of sufficient
 " ability to answer the said duties payable
 " on advertisements, shall join in the se-
 " curity (to government) for the punctual
 " payment of the duties." By this clause
 the commissioners of the stamp-duties are
 put in possession of the names not only of
 the printers, but of the several proprietors
 of news-papers, and of legal evidence of
 their being such. This act also contains a
 clause, by which a penalty of five pounds
 is laid on all those who shall even lend
 a news-paper for hire. This is a refine-
 ment in finance below the genius of George
 Grenville;

Grenville; and which even that gentleman, though stiled by the father of the present minister "a pepper-corn financier," would probably have regarded with contempt.

As I am speaking of taxes relating to the press, I shall take this opportunity of remarking, that some of the late stamp-duties, duties on paper, &c. have been laid on literature with rather too unsparing a hand. The stamp-duties and expences of advertisements are so high, that an author has often seven or eight pounds to pay even for advertising a pamphlet; which is certainly a very heavy tax on literature. As our present nobility, and persons of rank and influence, are not remarkable for their liberal patronage of literature, they should not be quite so ready as they are to do it injury, or to concur in those measures that burthen and oppress it.

WHEN a new parliament shall have leisure to attend, not merely to temporary
I 2 objects,

objects, but to those measures that may be lastingly beneficial to the nation, it would be highly proper to advert to those real improvements in our constitution, which may be dictated by sound wisdom, and impartial investigation. I would not wish to have any alteration made in the general system of our laws, or in our constitution, but on the most mature deliberation: but to suppose that the English constitution is so perfect, that no improvements can be made in it; and that whilst advances are continually making in knowledge, our civil and political regulations ought to undergo no alterations, can arise only from extreme bigotry, and from very narrow and very contracted views.

LET us be permitted to hope, that many of the public evils, which are now justly complained of, will be removed by the virtue and the wisdom of the present parliament; that they will adopt, and carry into

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execution,

execution, such plans for a reform in the representation of the people in the house of commons, and for shortening the duration of parliaments, as shall be most congenial to the spirit of the constitution; that they will repeal unjust and oppressive laws; that they will be careful, in passing new laws, not to violate the just rights of the people; that they will remember, that the maintenance of the public liberty is an object of infinitely greater magnitude and importance, than any new arrangements in finance, or pretended augmentations of the national revenue; that they will be vigilant in guarding the people from any secret or open attacks upon their rights by the ministers of the crown; and that the aim and result of their most solemn deliberations will be, establishing the freedom, and advancing the real interests and prosperity of Great Britain.

APPENDIX.

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A P P E N D I X.

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SINCE this pamphlet was written, and the greatest part of it printed, the Right Hon. EDMUND BURKE has published, "Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the Proceedings in certain Societies in London relative to that Event, in a Letter intended to have been sent to a Gentleman in Paris." In this piece Mr. Burke has very warmly attacked the proceedings of the Society for Constitutional Information, and of the Revolution Society of London; and as I am a member of both those Societies, and was

one of those who the most heartily concurred in the particular proceedings which have given so much umbrage to Mr. Burke, I shall take this opportunity of making some remarks on his publication.

OF Mr. Burke I shall previously observe, that I have always entertained a high respect for the talents and the character of this very ingenious, eloquent, and learned writer, though I could not always concur with him in sentiment; and I have considered many of his parliamentary exertions as justly entitled to great and distinguished applause. I cannot, therefore, but most sincerely regret, that such admirable abilities should be employed, in productions so little friendly to some of the most important interests of mankind, as his late "Reflections on the Revolution in France."

AT the beginning of his book Mr. Burke gives his French correspondent some account of the two Societies whose conduct

duct he arraigns. But his account of these Societies is not remarkably courteous, and not very accurate. Of the Society for Constitutional Information, he says, among other things, ‘ That the institution of this Society appears to be of a charitable, and so far of a laudable, nature : it was intended for the circulation, at the expence of the members, of many books, which few others would be at the expence of buying ; and which might lie on the hands of the booksellers, to the great loss of an useful body of men *.’ The designs of this Society were not quite so charitable either to authors, or booksellers, as Mr. Burke supposes. The intention of the Society, and the object of their institution, as expressed by themselves, was “ to diffuse throughout the kingdom, as “ universally as possible, a knowledge of the “ great principles of Constitutional Free-

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 3.

dom, particularly such as respected the election and duration of the representative body." With this view constitutional tracts, and essays and extracts from various authors, such as Sydney, Locke, Trenchard, lord Somers, and many others, were printed, and distributed *gratis*, at the expence of the Society: but no authors, or booksellers, derived any pecuniary advantage from the publications of the Society. In justice to the Society, I shall also observe, that I have never known any body of men whose views appeared to be more pure and patriotic, and which consisted in general of persons of more integrity, or of more unblemished characters. Nor was it so obscure a Society as it is represented by Mr. Burke. This "poor charitable club," as he is pleased politely to stile it, has numbered among its members, lord Surrey, the present duke of Norfolk, the duke of Richmond, the earl of Effingham, Sir William Jones, Mr.

Sheridan,

Sheridan, Sir Cecil Wray, Mr. James Martin, the late excellent Dr. John Jebb, and many other very respectable men.

THE vote of congratulation to the National Assembly of France, which has been so severely attacked by Mr. Burke, originated in the Revolution Society, though it was afterwards adopted by the Society for Constitutional Information. The Revolution Society Mr. Burke styles "a club of Dissenters *;" and it is true, that this Society was originally established by Dissenters, who, as a body, have always been zealously attached to the Revolution, and to those principles of civil and religious liberty, which they conceive to be naturally connected with that important event. But, for some years past, many members of the established church have attended their annual and other meetings. At

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 41

some of those meetings I have also occasionally seen lord Surrey, the present duke of Norfolk, the marquis of Carmarthen, now duke of Leeds, the duke of Richmond, and the duke of Manchester: for lords, when they are out of office, will sometimes do themselves the honour to appear as members of such Societies. The meetings of the Revolution Society have likewise been attended by very respectable members of the House of Commons.

BUT the meeting of the Society, which has principally given offence to Mr. Burke, was that of the fourth of November, 1789. ‘ I never heard,’ says he, ‘ that any public
 ‘ measure, or political system, much less
 ‘ that the merits of the constitution of any
 ‘ foreign nation, had been the subject of
 ‘ a formal proceeding at their festivals;
 ‘ until, to my inexpressible surprize, I
 ‘ found them in a sort of public capacity,
 ‘ by a congratulatory address, giving an
 ‘ autho-

‘ *authoritative sanction* to the proceedings
‘ of the National Assembly in France *.’

ON the day referred to by Mr. Burke, a motion was made in the Revolution Society by Dr. Price, that the following congratulatory address to the National Assembly of France should be agreed to, and transmitted to them, signed by the chairman :

‘ The Society for commemorating the
‘ Revolution in Great Britain, disdaining
‘ national partialities, and rejoicing in every
‘ triumph of liberty and justice over arbitrary power, offer to the National Assembly of France their congratulations on
‘ the Revolution in that country, and on
‘ the prospect it gives to the first kingdoms
‘ in the world, of a common participation
‘ in the blessings of civil and religious liberty.

• Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 5.

‘ They

' They cannot help adding their ardent
 ' wishes of an happy settlement of so im-
 ' portant a Revolution, and at the same
 ' time expressing the particular satisfaction,
 ' with which they reflect on the tendency
 ' of the glorious example given in France
 ' to encourage other nations to assert the
 ' unalienable rights of mankind, and there-
 ' by to introduce a general reformation in
 ' the governments of Europe, and to make
 ' the world free and happy.'

THIS address was accordingly unani-
 mously agreed to, and being signed by Earl
 Stanhope, who acted as chairman of the
 Society on that occasion, was transmit-
 ted to the Duke de Rochefoucault at Paris.
 It was received in the National Assembly
 with great applause, and the archbishop of
 Aix, then president of the National As-
 sembly, by their direction wrote a letter to
 lord Stanhope, as chairman of the Revo-
 lution Society, ' expressing the lively and
 ' deep

' deep ſenſibility with which the National
 ' Aſſembly of France received the addreſs
 ' of the Revolution Society in England,
 ' which breathed thoſe ſentiments of hu-
 ' manity and univerſal benevolence, that
 ' ought to unite together, in all countries of
 ' the world, the true friends of liberty and of
 ' the happineſs of nations.' In a letter writ-
 ten by the duke de Rochefoucault to Dr.
 Price on that occaſion, that nobleman alſo
 ſays, that the National Aſſembly had ſeen, in
 the addreſs of the Revolution ſociety, ' the
 ' dawn of a glorious day, in which two
 ' nations, who had always eſteemed each
 ' other, notwithstanding their political di-
 ' viſions, and the diverſity of their govern-
 ' ments, ſhould contract an intimate union,
 ' founded on the ſimilarity of their opi-
 ' nions, and their common enthuſiaſm for
 ' liberty.'

IN the addreſs of congratulation, voted
 by the Revolution ſociety, they had cer-
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tainly no idea, as Mr. Burke has stated, of giving any "authoritative sanction" to the proceedings of the National Assembly of France. Nor had they any intention to deceive, as Mr. Burke not very candidly supposes, by communicating a false idea of the nature or importance of their society. Whatever was done respecting the Revolution in France in the Revolution society of London, was done in the most open and public manner; and any information concerning the society might have been easily obtained, either by Englishmen or by Frenchmen, who had thought proper to make any inquiries concerning it. As to any supposed irregularity in the address of such a society to such a body as the National Assembly of France, they were aware that it might be liable to some objection of that kind; and, therefore, in the letter which was sent to the duke de Rochefoucault, requesting him to present the address to the National Assembly, it was observed,

that

that ‘ the Society considered the National
 ‘ Assembly as acting for the world, as well
 ‘ as for the great kingdom it represented,
 ‘ and therefore hoped that their address was
 ‘ not an improper intrusion ; or, if it was,
 ‘ that it would be excused as an effusion of
 ‘ zeal in the cause of general liberty and hu-
 ‘ man happiness, which no considerations
 ‘ of impropriety had been able to sup-
 ‘ press.’

It was the design of the Revolution so-
 ciety to testify to the French nation, that
 notwithstanding the antient hostility which
 had subsisted between England and France,
 there were many of the English who sin-
 cerely rejoiced that the French had regained
 their liberties, and wished to see them fully
 established. It was with the same view
 that more than six hundred persons assem-
 bled in the city of London, on the 6th of
 July, 1790, in order to celebrate the Re-
 volution in France, on the same day in

which it was so magnificently celebrated at Paris. I attended this meeting in London with an high degree of pleasure, as I have always wished for the establishment of liberty in France *, and been desirous of promoting

* Before the congratulatory address of the Revolution Society, and before the French Revolution had taken place, I had expressed, and very sincerely, my wishes for the establishment of liberty in France. On the 4th of November, 1788, it being a century from the period of the Revolution, I delivered a short oration to the Revolution society, by their desire, and which at their request was printed. In a note to this is the following passage, which was published many months before the destruction of the Bastile, and the other events which have contributed to the establishment of the French revolution. ‘ I sincerely wish success to all the efforts of the French nation for the recovery of their liberties; and I should rejoice to see them possessed of a constitution similar to that of England. It must, indeed, be the wish of every friend to the rights of mankind, that the blessings of freedom may be extended to the whole human race. Having mentioned the French nation, I shall also remark, that it is ardently to be desired, that England and France may no longer continue their antient hostility against each other; but that France may regain possession of her liberties; and that two nations, so eminently distin-

moting every public testimony of the same sentiments among my countrymen. But Mr. Burke seems to be of opinion, that public declarations, respecting the transactions of foreign countries, should be made only by persons invested with authority. It is, however, not among lords of the treasury, or secretaries of state, or the favourites of a court, that men distinguished by their zeal for the promotion of human liberty, and human happiness, are often to be found. They who are invested with the powers of government in any country, may be actuated by very different motives from those of an enlarged philanthropy; but that is no reason why the inhabitants of a free country, or any part of them, should not testify, if they judge it expedient, in

‘ distinguished in arms, and in literature, instead of
 ‘ exhausting themselves in sanguinary wars, for no
 ‘ valuable purpose, may unite together in communi-
 ‘ cating the advantages of freedom, science, and the
 ‘ arts, to the most remote regions of the earth.’

the most public and solemn manner, their joy at such events as happen in other countries, which may tend to the advantage of such countries, to advance the liberty of the inhabitants, and to increase the felicity of mankind. Such intercourses between different nations are calculated to promote that enlarged and comprehensive benevolence, the diffusion of which would communicate peace and happiness to the world.

THE meeting in London, on the 14th of July, 1790, to celebrate the French revolution, gave rise to the Anglo-Gallic festival at Nantes, on the 23d of August following, to which all the English in that city, and in the neighbouring towns, were invited. This festival was given by the *Société des Amis de la Constitution à Nantes*, a society consisting of several hundred members, and from that society M. Français, their

their president, and M. Bougon *, were sent as deputies to the Revolution society of London. Mr. Burke seems much offended at the proceedings of this society †, as well as that of the societies in London, who testified their joy at the Revolution in France. But to me it appears, that the

* These gentlemen, during their residence in London, were much and deservedly respected for the politeness of their manners, the good sense and knowledge which they displayed, their love of liberty, and the strong desire which they manifested to promote perpetual peace and union between France and Great Britain. Some other persons, as well as Mr. Burke, might possibly entertain suspicions respecting the nature of these gentlemen's commission: but they had evidently no other aim than that of testifying their regard, and that of those who sent them, for the people of England, and advancing the interests of liberty and peace in both nations. As to the intimation that seems to be thrown out by Mr. Burke, that these gentlemen came here as a kind of missionaries for the propagation of infidelity, and of *atheistical fanaticism*, this is an idea that is certainly destitute of the least foundation.

† Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 227.

Anglo-

Anglo-Gallic festival at Nantes *, in which Frenchmen and Englishmen united together as brethren, and testified the most ardent desire for the liberty and happiness of both nations, and that perpetual peace and harmony might be established between them, was, in the eye of reason and humanity, a much more pleasing scene, than any that were exhibited in those ages of chivalry, of which Mr. Burke seems to be so much enamoured. Of these meetings, both in France and in England, I have the fullest conviction, that they originated in the best and the worthiest motives, in an extended philanthropy, and in an ardent zeal for those great rights of mankind, compared with which the private interests of kings, as individuals, are entitled to little notice or regard.

* Vid. the account of this *Fête Anglo-Française*, printed at Nantes in 8vo. in 1790.

BUT Mr. Burke, adverting to the address of the Revolution Society, says, ' I must
 ' be tolerably sure, before I venture pub-
 ' licly to congratulate men upon a blessing,
 ' that they have really received one*;' and
 also that ' the circumstances are what
 ' render every civil and political scheme
 ' beneficial or noxious to mankind †.' On
 these principles the conduct of the Revolution Society may be vindicated. Before
 their address of congratulation was presented, they had received sufficient evidence,
 that the French nation had emancipated
 themselves from a form of government,
 which was certainly in a very high degree
 despotic. They had chosen a body
 of national representatives, whose interest
 it was to promote the welfare of their
 country, and who appeared to be actuated
 by the worthiest motives. Indeed, more

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 9.

† Ibid. p. 8.

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noble,

noble, and more patriotic sentiments, were never exhibited in any country, than were displayed during the course of the late revolution in France. Great and important advances had also been made in the formation of a free constitution of government for that kingdom; and the rights of men had been declared and ascertained, with a clearness and precision that has scarcely ever been equalled in any of the revolutions of nations. These were sufficient grounds for the conduct of the Revolution Society of London, in voting and transmitting their address of congratulation; nor could it be necessary, previously to such a measure, that they should wait for the final settlement and completion of the French constitution.

MR. BURKE says of the French nation, that ' they have been tempted to throw off
' their allegiance to their sovereign, as well
' as the antient constitution of their coun-
try.'

‘ try *.’ These are well sounding words; but if the French, by throwing off their allegiance to their sovereign, which was not without reason, and the antient constitution of their country, have obtained real liberty, and a better constitution, they have acted very wisely and rationally. And as to the supposed degradation of the king, it was nothing but a degradation from a power, which neither he, nor any of his ancestors, ought ever to have possessed.

MR. BURKE declaims very copiously, and very eloquently, on some irregularities, and acts of violence, that have taken place in France since the Revolution. It was not to be expected that a people, just emerging from a despotic government to an high degree of liberty, should in every respect act with perfect discretion, wisdom, and

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 77, 78.

moderation. But after all the pathetic representations made by Mr. Burke of the transactions of the 6th of October, 1789, and after taking into the account the preceding and subsequent transactions, we may venture to affirm, that no revolution of such importance, and such magnitude, was ever effected with so little bloodshed. Many circumstances before, and after the revolution, naturally exasperated the people, and excited them to acts of violence. The firing on the people in the gardens of the Thuilleries on the 12th of July, 1789, justly increased the suspicions of the inhabitants of Paris respecting the designs of the court; and when the National Assembly was conceived to be in danger, when foreign troops were brought to act against the citizens, when artillery was pointed against the capital, when the ministry was changed, and mareschal Broglie was made minister of war, the people had abundant reason to believe, that all which had been
done

done in favour of their liberties was about to be over-turned. They distrusted the king, and they considered the queen as undoubtedly hostile to the national freedom. These circumstances naturally excited the indignation of the people; their violence was increased by the scarcity of corn which then prevailed; and to these and similar causes the disorders which arose may justly be attributed. It should also be remembered, that in a time of civil commotion and tumult, false rumours may operate powerfully on the minds of the multitude, and lead them to acts of which they would not be guilty, were they accurately acquainted with the real state of things.

MR. BURKE seems to be much affected with the present state of the king of France, under the idea of his being an imprisoned king. But if this statement of Mr. Burke were precisely the case, an imprisoned

prisoned monarch is an inconsiderable evil compared with that of an enslaved nation. Among other statements which Mr. Burke makes, relative to the behaviour of the French to their king, he says, that they have rebelled 'against a mild and lawful monarch, with more fury, outrage, and insult, than ever any people has been known to rise against the most illegal usurper, or the most sanguinary tyrant *.' But without referring to the histories of other nations, surely our own history will afford instances of kings, who have experienced much rougher treatment, than any which has yet been offered to Lewis the Sixteenth. Our Charles the First, as Mr. Burke well knows, was publicly executed before the front of his own palace, and his son James the Second was dethroned, and for ever banished from the kingdom. In more antient times, Richard the Second

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 56.

was

was dethroned by parliament, and died in confinement, though the manner of his death is differently related. Henry the Sixth also died in the Tower, and by a violent death, according to the generality of our historians.

THOUGH Mr. Burke expresses great concern for the present condition of the king of France, he endeavours still more to engage the passions of his readers against the revolution, by his pathetic representations of the supposed sufferings of the queen of France. I do not know that any authentic information has been transmitted to this country of any very severe sufferings of the queen: but what are the private and personal interests and feelings of a queen of France, or of an hundred queens of France, though decorated with all the beauty and accomplishments with which Mr. Burke has complimented the present queen, compared with the freedom
and

and the happiness of more than twenty-five millions of people? No knight-errants, we may presume, will be found in this country, nor probably in any other, to fall forth in defence of king Lewis, or his virtuous and distressed consort, notwithstanding those enchanting graces in the fair queen, which Mr. Burke has displayed with so much eloquence and gallantry.

INDEED, our ingenious author himself remarks, that "the age of chivalry is gone *;" and, therefore, we may easily believe, that the dull, and unsentimental people of the present age, will not think it necessary for the peace of the world, that ten thousand swords should leap from their scabbards †, whenever a disrespectful, or even a menacing look, is cast at a queen of France, or at a queen

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 113.

† Ibid. p. 112.

of any other country. We may also venture to be of opinion, that it will be much better that a nation, like the French, consisting of gallant men, of men of honour, and of cavaliers *, should draw their swords, whenever it be necessary, in defence of the liberties of their country, rather than in defence of any pretended privileges of queens, or any assumed and arbitrary prerogatives of kings.

It is in no respect wonderful, that kings should sometimes be "hurled from their thrones," and that this should occasionally be done with circumstances that may aggravate their sense of the calamity attendant on their fall. But it is truly wonderful, that such great numbers of the human race should submit, with so much servility, to men invested with the regal dignity, who are totally unworthy of the

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 112.

office they bear, and to whom at the same time powers are given, that it would be unsafe to intrust even to the best and wisest of the human species. Indeed, the degradation of human nature, in the submission that is paid to the authority of tyrants under the denomination of kings, is a much juster subject of lamentation, than the degradation of some inconsiderable individuals, probably little distinguished by any estimable quality, either moral or intellectual, but who may happen to be decorated with the trappings of royalty.

MR. BURKE certainly carries his reverence for chivalry too far, when he affirms, that, on account of its decline, or of that of the sentiments it inspired, "the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever*." Europe, I think, may still subsist, very honourably subsist, and with all its glory,

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 113.

though

though all that "proud submission," and that "dignified obedience*," of which Mr. Burke speaks, should be for ever banished from the face of the earth.

AMONG other things which Mr. Burke says he should look for in "the new liberty of France," before he offered any congratulations upon it, one is, that it was combined "with the discipline and obedience of armies †." But I must confess, that I differ so much from Mr. Burke on this subject, that I think matters in this world will never be as they ought, while there is a single standing army subsisting, on the principles on which all the standing armies in Europe are now constituted. It may be proper, that the inhabitants of the different countries of the world should be armed, as free citizens, for their own defence, and that they should be occasionally

* Id. *ibid.*

† *Ibid.* p. 9.

exercised ; but the standing armies of Europe, or of any other quarter of the globe, I consider, in general, as only calculated to support the tyranny of princes, and to disturb the peace of the world,

“ WE have seen,” says Mr. Burke, “ the king of France sold by his foldiers “ for an increase of pay *.” But, in justice to the French soldiers, that ought to be supposed, which I have no doubt to have been the fact, that the light and knowledge, respecting the principles of government, which had been much diffused among other classes of men in France, had also extended itself to the military, and that many of them were desirous of freeing their country from the despotism under which it had long laboured. The French troops, by deserting their king, to promote the freedom of their country, acted the part

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 138.

of good citizens, and of good Frenchmen. They probably remembered, that they were, or that they ought to be, not merely the troops of the king, but of the nation ; that they derived their subsistence from taxes paid by the people ; and that if they employed their arms in support of public liberty, they discharged the most important of all duties, that to their Creator only excepted, their duty to their country.

IF it be imagined, that some of the French troops were influenced by the idea of double pay, we may still consider the offer made to them as a very justifiable act of policy ; and if it should be supposed, that the desertion of the French troops from their king, may make other princes distrustful of their armies, it will be no great evil to mankind. Standing armies, in general, may justly be regarded as the agents and instruments of despotism ; and if it should be found, that such standing
armies

armies are not always to be trusted, princes will learn to depend less upon their troops, and more upon their people.

MR. BURKE is apprehensive, that the doctrines now propagated among the French soldiers, concerning "the rights of men," will not tend to make *mere instruments* of them, which he, with M. de la Tour du Pin, thinks military men, as such, ought always to be. He also expresses his astonishment, that they should be directed, by authority, occasionally to mix in the convivial meetings and associations of their fellow citizens * ; and he animadverts upon the measures that are adopted to excite them to read, as well as to engage in military exercises, they being, he says, "full as well supplied with the ammunition of pamphlets as of cartridges †." I

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 310.

† Ibid. p. 309.

agree in opinion with Mr. Burke, that this method of treating the French soldiers, may possibly not so well qualify them to be *mere instruments*, or machines, as the manner in which soldiers are ordinarily trained in other countries. But if they should not be such complete *instruments*, nor quite so good soldiers, they will probably be better men, and better citizens. They may be fully equal to all the purposes of defending their country against internal oppression, or foreign invasion; though they may not engage with so much alacrity, as French troops have formerly done, in enterprizes to over-turn the liberties, or to interrupt the tranquillity of foreign nations.

IN enumerating some of the evils that he supposes will arise from the French revolution, and from the propagation of the principles by which it is supported, Mr. Burke says, "Kings will be tyrants

“ from policy, when subjects are rebels
 “ from principle *.” To this, which has
 somewhat of the appearance of a threat
 on the part of tyranny, I answer, that if
 opposition to tyranny be termed rebellion,
 whenever just principles of government shall
 prevail among mankind, tyrants will cease
 to have any existence in this world, either
 as princes, or as men. Their policy and
 their power will be equally annihilated.

Mr. BURKE endeavours to prove, that
 the late government in France has been
 represented in a worse light than it de-
 served. Men have spoken of it, he says,
 as if it resembled the despotic governments
 of Persia, or of Turkey. But, he adds,
 ‘ Facts do not support this resemblance.
 ‘ Along with much evil, there is some
 ‘ good in monarchy itself; and some cor-
 ‘ rective to its evil, from religion, from

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 116.

‘ laws,

‘ laws, from manners, from opinions, the
 ‘ French monarchy must have received ;
 ‘ which rendered it (though by no means
 ‘ a free, and therefore by no means a good
 ‘ constitution) a despotism rather in ap-
 ‘ pearance than in reality *.’ But we may
 certainly be of opinion, that the govern-
 ment of France was so despotic, as to have
 rendered a revolution extremely desirable,
 without supposing it to be “ a positively
 “ destructive government †,” or “ the worst
 “ of all political institutions ‡.” We may
 readily admit, that there are governments
 in the world much more despotic than the
 late government of France ; we may also
 admit, that the despotism of the French
 government had received some mitigation
 “ from religion, from laws, from man-
 “ ners, from opinions ;” and yet, when we
 have admitted all this, we may very con-

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 189.

† Ibid. p. 194,

‡ Ibid. p. 192.

sistently maintain, that it was a government so radically bad, and in which there was so much despotism, that such a government ought never to have existed among mankind. In France, before the revolution, the common people were oppressed by the crown, by the nobility, and by the power of the ecclesiastics ; the commonalty and peasantry groaned under the weight of unequal and unjust taxes, and of burthenome and unreasonable feudal services ; the laws did not inflict punishment on the guilty, nor afford protection to innocence : liberty of conscience was not allowed, nor the freedom of speech, or of the press ; *lettres de cachet* for the arbitrary imprisonment of the most respectable citizens were often obtained with facility by the mistress of a king, or of a minister ; the worthiest men might be thrown into dungeons, and imprisoned at pleasure, without even knowing the offences with which they were charged ;

charged; and no man could be secured, by the laws of his country, from perpetual imprisonment, or the grossest injuries and indignities, if directed or authorized by the minions of the court. Indeed, Mr. Burke himself acknowledges, that the sovereign of France had an "unlimited power over the persons of his subjects †." No opposition could be too great against such a power, by whomsoever it might be possessed; and we need not hesitate to pronounce, that there can be no country upon earth in which such a government ought to be endured, as that which subsisted in France before the revolution.

BUT Mr. Burke considers the state of population in France as an argument in favour of its government. He gives a favourable account of the population of that country, and remarks, that "no country in which population flourishes,

† *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 195.

“ and is in progressive improvement, can
 “ be under a very mischievous govern-
 “ ment*.” But the population of a coun-
 try is certainly no criterion of the excel-
 lency of its government; at least it affords
 no proof that freedom is enjoyed by its
 inhabitants, or that the government is not
 despotic. The history of mankind will
 afford abundant instances, that the human
 species may subsist, and even increase in
 numbers, under very great degrees of op-
 pression. Wherever, from the fertility of
 the soil, or any other causes, the means of
 subsistence are easily afforded to the com-
 mon people, population will naturally in-
 crease, though the government may be
 oppressive and despotic. No man, who
 has any just ideas of civil liberty, or any
 attachment to it, will commend the Prussian
 government; and yet the population of that
 country has, within the last thirty years,
 been more increased, than that of other

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 189.

nations who have enjoyed a much greater degree of liberty.

Mr. BURKE speaks in very high terms of the condition of France before the revolution, of the state of agriculture, of commerce, of manufactures; of her progress in the arts, her splendid edifices, of the illustrious men that the country has produced, and the distinguished figure that France has made in the history of modern Europe. But this only serves to prove, that great things may be done by such a nation as the French, though labouring under many oppressions from the form of their government. It may, however, be admitted, that the French monarchs sometimes exercised their power with a considerable degree of clemency and moderation, and that they have had some very wise and able ministers, whose administration has contributed to the prosperity of France. But notwithstanding this, there was certainly,

tainly; prior to the revolution, a great degree of poverty among the middling and inferior classes of the people in that kingdom, which chiefly derived its source from the faults of its government. As for the persons of distinguished talents and character who have appeared in France, I have long observed, with admiration, as well as Mr. Burke, the many great men who have adorned that country; and have remarked the many excellent qualities which were manifested by its inhabitants; and for that reason have I the more regretted, that such a nation should be subjected to a government so totally unworthy of it, as that which subsisted in France before the revolution.

AFTER having given a very favourable account of the state of France previous to the late revolution, Mr. Burke says,
 ‘ Whether the system, if it deserves such
 ‘ a name, now built on the ruins of that
 ‘ antient

' antient monarchy, will be able to give a
 ' better account of the population and
 ' wealth of the country, which it has
 ' taken under its care, is a matter very
 ' doubtful. Instead of improving by the
 ' change, I apprehend that a long series
 ' of years must be told before it can re-
 ' cover in any degree the effects of this
 ' philosophic revolution, and before the
 ' nation can be replaced on its former foot-
 ' ing *.' A considerable scarcity of specie
 may naturally have been occasioned by
 many of the nobility, and other persons
 of opulence, having quitted Paris; and
 their emigration must also, for the present,
 have been injurious to trade and com-
 merce. But these are temporary evils,
 which it was not in the power of the
 National Assembly to prevent, and for
 which they can deserve no censure. It may
 also be true, that the population of France,

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 196.

upon

upon the whole, may for the present be decreased. But the nation will not eventually be the worse for being deserted by the friends of despotism ; and there can be no doubt, but that when a free constitution of government has been for some time firmly established, the wealth, the population, and the general prosperity of the kingdom, will receive a very high degree of augmentation. Unfavourable circumstances might, however, at first naturally be expected ; for it could not reasonably be supposed, that blessings of so inestimable a value, as those of civil and religious liberty, could be obtained in such a country as France, without some inconveniences, some dangers, and some sacrifices.

OF all the proceedings of the National Assembly of France, nothing seems to have excited so much indignation in Mr. Burke, as the confiscation of the estates of the church ; and he is extremely desirous of
persuading

persuading his correspondent, that the inhabitants of this country in general feel the same indignation that he does upon the subject. He affirms of the people of England, that 'they see with horror and alarm
' that enormous and shameless act of pro-
' scription *;' and he also says, 'I assure
' you, that there is not one public man in
' this kingdom, whom you would wish to
' quote; no not one of any party or de-
' scription, who does not reprobate the
' dishonest, perfidious, and cruel confisca-
' tion, which the National Assembly has
' been compelled to make of that pro-
' perty which it was their first duty to
' protect †.'

I SHOULD be extremely unwilling to believe, that Mr. Burke has advanced what he does not himself suppose to be

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 156.

† Id. ibid.

true; but, I confess, I can no more believe, that the generality of the people of this country, or the more respectable public men, view the sale of the church lands in France in the same light that Mr. Burke does, than I could believe an assertion, that the generality of the respectable public men in this country were Mahometans. I am fully convinced, that the greatest part of the people of this country, whether public or private men, have viewed this transaction without any horror, and with very little alarm, and that by many it has been entirely approved.

MUCH of Mr. Burke's reasoning, concerning the proceedings of the National Assembly respecting the lands of the church, is inconclusive, because it is grounded upon a principle that very few persons will admit besides himself; namely, that the possessions of the church were to be considered in the same light, and as equally sacred,
with

with private property. But in any country, if large estates, or incomes, are appropriated to the support of a particular class of men in the community, for the discharge of public offices, or for services to be rendered to the community, the interposition of the government, or legislature, in the appropriation or disposal of such estates, or incomes, or even the seizure and confiscation of them, has always been considered as a very different thing from the seizure or confiscation of private property *. For if larger incomes are appropriated to any particular class of men,

* In one passage, Mr. Burke himself seems to be of opinion, that the revenues of such institutions as those of monasteries, were to be regarded in a different light from private property. For he says, ‘ In a question of reformation, I always consider corporate bodies, whether sole or consisting of many, to be much more susceptible of a *public direction* by the *power of the state*, in the *use of their property*, and in the regulation of modes and habits of life in their members, than private citizens ever can, or perhaps ought to be.’ *Reflections, &c.* p. 239.

for services, or supposed services, to the community, than is consistent with the general interest; or if establishments exist, supported by large revenues, that are more detrimental than beneficial to a community; in cases like these, the legislature have an undoubted right to interpose, and to adopt such measures as shall be most conducive to the welfare of the state.

OF the utility of ecclesiastical establishments in general, or of the utility of particular ecclesiastical establishments, different men will form different opinions. But those who believe, that ecclesiastical establishments, with large revenues, contribute much more to the perpetuation of error, and of superstition, than to the advancement of truth, and of real Christianity, must differ very essentially from Mr. Burke upon this subject. However, as to the ecclesiastical establishment of France, when we consider the great degree of superstition

stitution that was connected with that establishment, we may very properly regard what has been done respecting the church lands in that kingdom, not as arising from "wanton rapacity," but, in the language that Mr. Burke has given to the advocates for it, as "a great measure of national policy, adopted to remove an extensive, inveterate, superstitious mischief *." That many of the Gallican clergy were men of considerable learning, and of great personal merit, as Mr. Burke has stated, I have no doubt; I always had that idea of them; but it does not therefore follow, that the ecclesiastical establishment of which they composed a part, with all the superstition attendant on it, and all its appendages, could be supported with benefit to the French nation.

As Mr. Burke feels great indignation at the sale of the church lands, so he is also

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 230.

extremely

extremely dissatisfied at the abolition of the monasteries *. He thinks, that the monks were as well employed as many others, and feels a considerable reluctance "to disturb the tranquil repose of monastic quietude †." Many members, however, of the National Assembly, might justly consider "these vast estates," as Mr. Burke himself styles them, "of the ecclesiastic corporations ‡," of the monasteries and nunneries, and other institutions of that kind, as appropriated to the purposes of superstition, and as extremely injurious to the community. Independently, therefore, of the benefit which the state might derive from the appropriation of these revenues, they might be led by the purest principles of patriotism, without being either Atheists or Infidels, to concur in the abolition of these institutions. But

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 232, 236, 237, 238.

† Ibid. p. 237.

‡ Ibid. p. 163,

Mr.

Mr. Burke is of opinion, that if it had been necessary or proper to destroy these monasteries, their revenues might have been employed in some new institutions of a truly benevolent and public-spirited nature *. They certainly might have been so employed, and probably would, if the immediate necessities of the state had not rendered such schemes, at this time, inexpedient or impracticable.

MR. BURKE sometimes expresses himself very strongly concerning the irreligion and infidelity which have appeared in France; but there can be no reasonable doubt, that it was from that fabric of Romish superstition, which was supported in France by the revenues of the church in that kingdom, that much of the infidelity, which has there been manifested,

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 232, 233, 234.

derived

derived its origin. Superstition and absurdity, supported by established creeds, and ceremonial observances, that will not stand the test of any rational investigation, are natural sources of scepticism and infidelity. When Christianity is deformed by superstition, or by enthusiasm, those persons reject it with disdain, without examination or inquiry, who would have received and embraced it cheerfully and cordially, if it had been exhibited to them unadulterated and uncorrupted, with its native excellence, in the original beauty and simplicity with which it was delivered by its divine author.

MR. BURKE has said much concerning the importance of religion in promoting the welfare of society ; and there can be no doubt, but that real religion, the sincere worship of the Deity, and the practice of virtue, tends in a very high degree to advance the best interests of men even in
the

the present world. But I see nothing in the new constitution of France, that is not perfectly consistent with the existence of religion in that country, or which should even prevent the principles of Christianity, and the precepts which it enjoins, from being more exactly and universally adhered to, than they have ever yet appeared to be in that kingdom. By the new constitution of France, every man is to be permitted to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience; and there will be no impediment to the most extensive and successful propagation of religious truth. As to the design which Mr. Burke imputes to some of the French philosophers, of endeavouring to bring about the total abolition of Christianity *, that is an evil of which no man, who really believes its divine origin, can possibly entertain any serious apprehensions.

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 218.

RELIGION, so far as it can be promoted by any ecclesiastical establishments, is certainly chiefly promoted by the labours of the inferior clergy; and the inferior and parochial clergy of France are intended, by the new arrangements, to be placed in a better situation than they were before. But Mr. Burke says, that before the French revolution, there were about an hundred and twenty bishops in that kingdom*. Many persons, however, will probably be of opinion, that such a number of bishops, with large incomes, was not necessary for the advancement of religion in any country. Mr. Burke himself remarks, that ‘ the possessions of the church, through ‘ the patronage of the crown, generally ‘ devolved upon the nobility. The bi- ‘ shoprics, and the great commendatory ‘ abbies, were, with few exceptions, held ‘ by that order †.’ Is it then probable,

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 216.

† Ibid. p. 164.

or will any man suppose, that these great ecclesiastical possessions were, in any considerable degree, really employed in the promotion of piety and virtue? Mr. Burke, during his stay in France, was enlightened on the subject of husbandry by his conversations with Carthusian monks; and from such conversations he might possibly derive his favourable opinion of monasteries, and his regret at their dissolution; but whether from his conversations with the noble and right reverend prelates, whom he also met with in France, he derived any very copious information of the nature and success of their labours in the promotion of religion, we are unable to determine.

MR. BURKE seems to suppose, that the French, in consequence of the late revolution, will lose not only their religion, but their trade, their manufactures, and even their

their learning*. After these strange suppositions, which are just as probable as the tales in the Arabian Nights Entertainments, Mr. Burke asks, speaking of the French nation in this imaginary degraded state, 'What sort of a thing must be a nation of gross, stupid, ferocious, and at the same time poor and sordid barbarians, destitute of religion, honour, or manly pride, possessing nothing at present, and hoping for nothing hereafter †?' He is apprehensive, that the French nation are 'going fast, and by the shortest cut, to that horrible and disgusting situation.' 'Already,' he adds, 'there appears a poverty of conception, a coarseness and vulgarity in all the proceedings of the Assembly, and of all their instructors. Their liberty is not liberal. Their science is presumptuous ignorance. Their

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 118.

† Id. *ibid.*

'humanity

‘humanity is savage and brutal *.’ This is the character given by Mr. Burke of the National Assembly of France, a legislative body, who have manifested a greater degree of intellectual illumination, a more ardent zeal for the general interests of the community, and for the principles of just and equal liberty, and who have exhibited more noble and sublime views, than any other body of men invested with power in that country, from the foundation of the French monarchy to the present hour.

IN stating his objections to the new constitution of France, Mr. Burke intimates his apprehensions, that foreign states will not seriously enter into negotiations, relative to peace or war, with the French king, or with his ministers, while their power is so limited as it is at present †.

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 118.

† Ibid. p. 294.

There

There can, however, be no doubt, but that foreign powers will readily enter into negotiations with the French nation, or with any ministers, or executive officers, that they shall appoint, when their constitution is fully established. Mr. Burke remarks, that the French ministers have already experienced the inconveniencies of their situation, in the course of their proceedings relative to the differences between Spain and Great Britain *: but this was probably merely occasioned by the circumstance of the French constitution being not yet finally adjusted. In no country, immediately after a revolution, and before the public affairs are fully settled, can it be expected, that the executive business of government will be administered with the same ease, and the same regularity, as during a period of greater tranquillity. As to Mr. Burke's apprehensions of the

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 296.

intrigues of foreign powers in the National Assembly *, this is an evil that might in a great degree be avoided by proper laws and regulations; and does not appear to be of so dangerous a tendency, as entrusting the power of making war or peace to particular individuals, who may plunge nations into hostilities, for no other reason but the mere gratification of their own pride and ambition.

MR. BURKE is very copious in his remarks on the mode of electing the members of the National Assembly, and on the descriptions of men of which it is composed. He particularly objects to so great a number of practitioners of the law being returned, nor is he satisfied that there should be so many physicians and country clergymen. The representation of the people of France in the National Assembly

* Id. *ibid.*,

appears,

appears, however, notwithstanding all Mr. Burke's objections, to be very complete and comprehensive; men of all ranks and professions are represented, and returned as members; and there seems no good reason why we should suppose, that these country divines *, and practitioners of law and

* Mr. Burke sometimes professes a great respect for the church, and for churchmen, whether of France or of England: but it would not be easy to point out a more uncandid, not to say unjust, statement, relative to a considerable body of respectable French clergymen, than occurs in a passage of Mr. Burke's book. Speaking of the election of the representatives of the clergy to the *Tiers Etat*, he says, ' That election was so
' contrived, as to send a very large proportion of mere
' country curates to the great and arduous work of
' new-modelling a state; men who never had seen the
' state so much as in a picture; men who knew nothing of the world beyond the bounds of an obscure
' village; who, immersed in hopeless poverty, could
' regard all property, whether secular or ecclesiastical,
' with no other eye than that of *envy*; among whom
' must be *many*, who, for the *smallest hope* of the *meanest dividend in plunder*, would readily join in *any*
' attempts upon a body of wealth, in which they could
' hardly look to have any share, except in a *general*

' *scramble.*'

and phyfic, will not, to fay the leaft, make full as good legislators, as many of thofe fox-hunters and fportsmen, who have often appeared in the former parliaments of Great Britain; and who have been much more attentive to the prefervation of the game, than to the prefervation of the liberties, or to the promotion of the interefts of their country. If the people of France, in returning their members to the National Affembly, are apt to fhew a preference for professional men, that is no prefumptive argument of any propenfity in the French nation to a difregard of literature, or inattention to its ufe and its advantages.

‘*scramble.*’ *Reflections*, &c. p. 67. It can hardly be fupposed, than any of the French *Atheifts*, or *Infidels*, would have attempted to give a more difhonourable account than this of their clergy. It may not be improper to obferve here, that the perfons whom Mr. Burke, according to the French phrafeology, terms curates, are the fame clafs of men, who in England would be termed reftors, or vicars; in other words, the parochial clergy.

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As to the French clergymen who are returned, Mr. Burke himself informs us, that he met with many men of learning and merit among the superior French clergy; and there can be no reasonable doubt, but that there are also many men of merit among the inferior clergy, who will discharge the trust reposed in them, as members of the national assembly, with integrity and with ability.

WHETHER in the new constitution of France sufficient care has been taken, to keep the legislative and the executive powers distinct, or whether there are any material defects in the constitution, I pretend not to decide. A man may approve of the great principles on which the revolution has been conducted, and may think very highly of the general views and conduct of the National Assembly, without approving of every particular measure that they may have adopted. If any defects
should

should be discovered in the new constitution of France, there is so much information, knowledge, and good sense, diffused throughout that nation, that there is little reason to doubt, but that these defects will be rectified, and such a constitution finally established, as will in an eminent degree promote the freedom and the happiness of the people. Whatever new arrangements they may make in their mode of government, there can be no reason to apprehend, that so enlightened a people will ever descend, from the felicity and the dignity of freedom, to the wretchedness and the dishonour necessarily attendant on a despotic government.

MR. BURKE'S "Reflections on the Revolution in France," is a very splendid composition in point of language; he often displays a very luxuriant imagination; but he is extremely deficient in just reasoning. He has a great profusion of

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rhetoric,

rhetoric, but is very far from having an equal proportion of logic ; and his statement of facts, or what he relates as facts, relative to the French revolution, has often much more of the appearance of an historical romance, than of a just or impartial account of the real state of things. Besides his tropes and figures, he has taken great pains to engage the passions of his readers in opposition to the French revolution. He has a great dislike to Old Jewry sermons ; but I have never met with any Old Jewry sermon that contained so much of the false pathetic, as is to be found in this publication of Mr. Burke. With a very fine imagination, he appears to labour under strong prejudices ; and, indeed, of all writers, antient or modern, he is the most eloquent and ingenious advocate for the utility and the advantages that result from prejudice *.

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 129, 130.

IN the course of his book Mr. Burke has repeatedly expressed a high veneration for kings, and no inconsiderable degree of reverence for the order of nobility. There was, however, a time, when he did not appear to have such a profound respect either for kings or nobles. In his very masterly speech, in 1780, on presenting to the House of Commons a plan for the reform of the civil list establishment, he observes, that "kings are naturally lovers
 " of low company * ;" and in the same speech he also says, that "many of the
 " nobility are as perfectly willing to act
 " the part of flatterers, tale-bearers, parasites, pimps, and buffoons, as any of
 " the lowest and vilest of mankind can
 " possibly be †." I do not in the least controvert the truth of these positions of Mr. Burke, but I must observe, that they

* Speech of Edmund Burke, Esq; p. 68. 8vo. 1780.

† Ibid. p. 69.

certainly

certainly tend to diminish that "awe," with which he says, we "look up to "kings*," and somewhat of that profound respect which he seems inclined to recommend for the nobility; and to lead us to think, that no powers or privileges ought to be conferred on either kings or lords, that may probably be employed not to the benefit, but to the injury of the community.

As Mr. Burke has given a very injurious representation of the proceedings of the National Assembly of France, and of the Revolution in that country; so he has also given an account of the Revolution in England, in 1688, that is highly dishonourable to our ancestors, and repugnant to the most important principles of the British constitution. He particularly labours

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 128.

to refute the opinion, that the crown of England is derived from the choice of the people, and contends in very strong terms for a claim of hereditary right ; and what is singularly curious, he grounds his arguments, in support of this claim, on the circumstances and events that attended and were consequent to the Revolution. He speaks of the act of settlement, as intended to form an establishment, to secure that kind of succession, which was “ to PRE-
 “ CLUDE A CHOICE OF THE PEOPLE
 “ FOR EVER * ;” and of the “ Declaration
 “ of Right (the act of the 1st of Wil-
 “ liam and Mary, sess. 2. ch. 2.)” he says, that it “ is the corner-stone of our
 “ constitution, as reinforced, explained,
 “ improved, and its fundamental principles
 “ FOR EVER SETTLED †.” He also speaks of the rights and liberties of the subject,

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 33.

† Ibid. p. 21.

and

and the succession of the crown, as being "bound indissolubly together *," as if the liberties of the people would cease to exist, if there were any alteration of the hereditary succession.

THE whole tenor of our history will shew, that a claim to the crown founded merely on hereditary right, without the concurrence and approbation of the people and the parliament, is an absurd claim, which can never be supported. At least seven instances occur, from the time of William the Norman to the present period, in which the regular line of hereditary succession has been broken †; and these

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 22.

† William I. commonly called the Conqueror, who may be considered as at the head of that sacred line of hereditary succession, for which Mr. Burke seems to have so much reverence, was the bastard son of Robert, duke of Normandy. He was not succeeded by his eldest son, but by a younger son, generally known

these deviations have been repeatedly authorized by express acts of the legislature. Indeed, those who attend to the frequency with which these deviations from the order of lineal succession occur in our history, can hardly avoid feeling some astonishment, that any man should even dream of

known by the name of William Rufus, and he was afterwards succeeded by Henry I. the youngest son of William I. though Robert, the eldest son of the Conqueror, was yet living. Henry I. left a daughter, Maud, who was married to the emperor Henry IV, but she did not succeed to the crown of England, but the throne was ascended by Stephen, earl of Blois, who was the son of Adela, the fourth daughter of William I. Stephen was succeeded by Henry Plantagenet, son to the empress Maud.—Richard II. was dethroned, and was succeeded by Henry, duke of Lancaster, son of John of Gaunt.—Henry VI. was dethroned, and succeeded by Edward, duke of York, under the title of Edward IV. Soon after that prince's death, Richard, duke of Gloucester, mounted the throne, under the title of Richard III. He was killed in Bosworth field, and succeeded by Henry VII. whose title to the crown could be very ill supported upon any principles of hereditary succession.

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the "unbroken unity*" of the succession to the crown of England. The truth is, that the people of this country have in general preferred an hereditary succession of their princes, in order to avoid those tumults and convulsions which might be attendant on an elective monarchy. But the deviations from a regular, hereditary succession, are so many, as to afford sufficient evidence, that it was the sense both of the people and the parliament, from the earliest times to the present, that they had a right to alter the order of succession, whenever the safety and welfare of the nation should require it.

THE bill of exclusion, which passed the House of Commons in 1680, affords a

* Mr. Burke says, that the princess Sophia was named in the act of settlement, "that the monarchy "might preserve an *unbroken unity through all ages.*" Reflections, &c. p. 34.

full

full proof of the general sense of the nation at that period, of the right of parliament, as acting for the people, to change the order of succession. There was at that time no law which excluded a Papist from the throne ; and James, duke of York, was then the next heir to the crown, according to the order of lineal succession. But by the Exclusion bill, it was enacted, ' That James, duke of York, Albany, and ' Ulster, should be incapable of inheriting ' the crowns of England, Scotland, and ' Ireland, with the dependencies ; and of ' enjoying any of the titles, rights, prerogatives, and revenues, belonging to the ' said crowns.' In the debates upon this bill, it was repeatedly observed in the House of Commons, that " the succession " to the crown had been formerly often " changed by acts of parliament ;" and Mr. Hume, who was no great friend to the claims of the people, nor a very impartial reporter of parliamentary debates on the

side of the people, yet states, in his account of the debates on the bill of Exclusion, the following as some of the arguments then used by the advocates for that bill: ‘ In England, the legislative power is
 ‘ lodged in king, lords, and commons,
 ‘ which comprehend every order of the
 ‘ community: And there is no pretext for
 ‘ exempting any circumstance of govern-
 ‘ ment, not even the succession of the crown,
 ‘ from so full and decisive a jurisdiction *.

‘ Even

* Sir Thomas Smith, who was secretary of state in the reign of queen Elizabeth, expresses himself in the following terms concerning the power and authority of parliaments, in his Treatise of the “ Commonwealth of England:” ‘ The parliament abrogateth old laws, and maketh new; giveth order for things past, and for things hereafter to be followed; changeth right and possessions of private men, legitimateth bastards, establisheth forms of religion, altereth weights and measures, GIVETH FORM OF SUCCESSION TO THE CROWN, defineth of doubtful right, whereof is no law already made; appointeth subsidies, tailles, taxes, and impositions; giveth most free pardons and absolutions, restoreth in blood
 ‘ and

' Even exprefs declarations have, in this
 ' particular, been made of parliamentary
 ' authority : instances have occurred,
 ' where it has been exerted : and though
 ' prudential reasons may juſtly be alleg-
 ' ed, why ſuch innovations ſhould never
 ' be attempted but on extraordinary oc-
 ' caſions, THE POWER AND RIGHT ARE
 ' FOR EVER VESTED IN THE COMMU-
 ' NITY *.'

MR. BURKE remarks, that ' If ever
 ' there was a time favourable for eſtabliſh-
 ' ing the principle, that a king of popular
 ' choice was the only legal king, without
 ' and name ; as the higheſt court, condemneth or ab-
 ' ſolveth whom the prince will put to that trial. And,
 ' to be ſhort, all that ever the people of Rome might
 ' do, either in *Centuriatis Comitibus*, or *Tribunitiis*, the
 ' ſame may be done by the parliament of England.'
Smith's Common-wealth of England, p. 77. edit. Lond.
 1633.

* *History of England*, vol. VIII. p. 132. edit.
 8vo. 1763.

' all

‘ all doubt it was at the Revolution *.’ I agree with Mr. Burke, that this was a very favourable time for that purpose ; and think, that more ought to have been done in support of the rights of the people, than was done at that period, and that additional securities should have been required by the nation, in order to prevent future abuses of power, or exertions of regal tyranny. When, therefore, I join with others in commemorating the Revolution, I do not do it as commemorating a transaction, by which the people obtained all that they have a right to claim, but as an event upon the whole very favourable to liberty, and by which the rights of the people were more clearly ascertained than at any preceding period. This is a very just ground for commemorating the Revolution, though we may have a full conviction, that it was attended with defects,

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 23.

and

and have a sincere desire that those defects should be rectified.

MR. BURKE says, ' So far is it from
' being true, that we acquired a right by
' the Revolution to elect our kings, that
' if we had possessed it before, the English
' nation did at that time *most solemnly re-*
' *nounce and abdicate it, for themselves and*
' *for all their posterity for ever **.' This
most strange idea is grounded on the act
of succession, by which the parliament, in
the language generally used in such acts,
bind themselves, " their heirs and their
" posterity †." But it is not to be sup-
posed, that they had any just claim, or
that they imagined they had any claim,
to bind the people of England, in any
matters important to the community, in
such a manner as could not hereafter be

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 27.

† Ibid. p. 33.

altered. The claim would have been absurd; but they conceived, from the authority with which they were invested, that they had a right to make such arrangements, respecting the succession, or any other important points mentioned in the act, as they judged to be beneficial to the nation; and that these arrangements should be binding upon the nation, till some other alteration should be made by the same authority; that is, by the authority of the people and parliament of England. But, indeed, the competency of parliament to alter the succession, and to make new laws and regulations concerning it, has been established by an express act of the legislature, and it has been made highly penal to advance a contrary doctrine; for by an act passed in the sixth year of the reign of queen Anne, it was enacted, that if any person should affirm, ‘ That the kings or
‘ queens of this realm, with and by the
‘ authority of parliament, are not able to
‘ make

‘ make laws and statutes of sufficient force
 ‘ and validity to limit and bind the crown,
 ‘ and the descent, limitation, inheritance,
 ‘ and government thereof, every such per-
 ‘ son or persons shall incur the danger
 ‘ and penalty of *præmunire*, mentioned in
 ‘ the statute of *præmunire* made in the
 ‘ sixteenth year of the reign of king
 ‘ Richard the Second *.’

It is observed by Mr. Burke, that in the “ Act declaring the Rights and Liberties of the Subject, and settling the Succession of the Crown,” commonly called *the Bill of Rights*, ‘ not one word is said, ‘ nor one suggestion made, of a general ‘ right “ to choose our own governors; “ to cashier them for misconduct; and to “ form a government for ourselves †.” But these ideas were in reality necessarily implied in the act, though not directly and

* Cay’s edition of the Statutes, vol. III. p. 549.

† Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 21.

particularly expressed. In this act it is stated, that the declaration and resolution, by which William and Mary were raised to the throne, were made by " the lords spiritual and temporal, and commons assembled at Westminster, lawfully and freely REPRESENTING ALL THE ESTATES OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS REALM." It was by their authority that the crown was transferred from king James the Second to the prince and princess of Orange. This was certainly a claim made and asserted by the nation, or by the parliament acting in their name, and by their authority, of a right of choosing their own governors. For if they had a right to dethrone James, and to confer the crown on the prince of Orange, who was not the lineal successor, they had an equal right to take any other person, if they had judged it beneficial to the nation. Whether they would choose William, prince of Orange, or any other person, was not a question of right, but
of

of political expediency. William's wife Mary, who approached more nearly to the character of a lineal successor than her husband, though made nominally queen, was excluded, by the act of parliament which raised them to the throne, from real authority ; for it was expressly enacted, that " the entire, perfect, and full exercise
 " of the royal power and government,
 " should be only in, and executed by his
 " majesty."

BEFORE William and Mary were raised to the throne, it was debated in both houses, " Whether there was not an original contract between king and people?" and in both houses it was resolved in the affirmative. By both houses it was resolved, " That king James had broken the
 " original contract ;" and upon these votes was grounded the final resolution, that the throne was become vacant. In the bill

rights, the acts of misconduct and tyranny of king James II. were particularly stated; and the whole of the proceedings, taken together, amounted to a full and explicit declaration, that a king of England might, constitutionally, be dethroned for tyranny; or, in other words, for a violation of the contract between him and the people. And if the parliament of England justly claimed and exercised a right of dethroning a king for tyranny, and of appointing whom they pleased to succeed him, there can be no doubt, but they have an equal right to make such alterations in their administration, or mode of government, as they shall judge to be most advantageous to the community. It may also be observed, that if the parliament and people of England had a right to dethrone James the Second for tyranny and misconduct, they have an equal right to dethrone any other prince, of any other family, in
similar

similar circumstances; and of the degree of tyranny and misconduct, which would justify them in such a case, they are the sole and proper judges.

MR. BURKE says, that ‘ the Revolution
‘ was made to preserve our *antient* indis-
‘ putable laws and liberties, and that *antient*
‘ constitution of government, which is
‘ our *sole security* for law and liberty *.’

But is there a man of sense in the kingdom, excepting Mr. Burke, who can possibly be of opinion, that at such a period as the Revolution, the people had not a right to adopt every measure that would tend to promote the general interests and freedom of the nation, or that we have no other security for law and liberty, or no other claim to our rights, but what is merely grounded on the conduct, or the acquisitions of our ancestors? Our inge-

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 44.

nious author, indeed, takes abundant pains to point out the advantages of claiming our rights, not from reason, or from nature, but from *inheritance*. In an age, in which men are led to scrutinize exactly into the nature of government, and to trace it to its first principles, he would lead them to the ideas of barbarous and Gothic ages, and to antient superstitions, which even the votaries of Popery now find it necessary to abandon. An appeal to the rights of men, if prosecuted to its natural and legitimate consequences, will give liberty to the whole human race ; but an appeal to the rights and privileges of ancestors, such rights and privileges as can be clearly and distinctly ascertained and proved, will give liberty only to a small part of the human species, and much of what is communicated will be necessarily defective and imperfect.

MR. BURKE observes, that revolutions
 “ can rarely, if ever, be performed with-
 “ out force ;” and that “ no government
 “ could stand a moment, if it could be
 “ blown down with any thing so loose
 “ and indefinite, as an opinion of *miscon-*
 “ *duct* *.” It is true, that revolutions
 ought not to be attempted, on account of
 trifling instances of misconduct in govern-
 ment ; and there is little reason to appre-
 hend, that any attempts of that kind will
 be made on such a ground. Nations do
 not dethrone their kings but for some im-
 portant reason, for unjust extensions of
 power, or flagrant violations of the duties
 of the regal office. Mr. Locke justly re-
 marks, that ‘ Revolutions happen not upon
 ‘ every little mismanagement of public
 ‘ affairs. Great mistakes in the ruling
 ‘ part, many wrong and inconvenient laws,
 ‘ and all the slips of human frailty, will

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 38, 42.

' be borne by the people without mutiny
 ' or murmur. But if a long train of
 ' abuses, prevarications, and artifices, all
 ' tending the same way, make the design
 ' visible to the people, and they cannot
 ' but feel what they lie under, and see
 ' whither they are going; it is not to be
 ' wondered, that they should then rouse
 ' themselves, and endeavour to put the
 ' rule into such hands which may secure
 ' to them the ends for which government
 ' was at first erected; and without which,
 ' antient names, and specious forms, are
 ' so far from being better, that they are
 ' much worse than the state of nature, or
 ' pure anarchy; the inconveniences being
 ' all as great and as near, but the remedy
 ' farther off, and more difficult *.'

ON a full consideration of all that has
 been advanced by Mr. Burke, on the subject

* Treatise on Civil Government, Book II. §. 225.

of the Revolution in England, in 1688, we may venture to affirm, that his account of that transaction, and his statement of the principles on which it was effected, and which result from it, are not grounded upon the ideas of our ancestors, nor upon the ideas of those who were the most instrumental in bringing about that great event ; and that they are contrary to all just sentiments respecting the rights of human nature, and the true origin and design of civil government. Mr. Burke has intimated his apprehensions, that the French nation have formed erroneous ideas of the opinions and dispositions of the people of England, from " certain publications *," which have appeared in this country, meaning, apparently, the publications of the Constitutional and the Revolution Societies. But, I must confess, that I have met with no publications that

* *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 126.

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appeared

appeared to me so grossly to misrepresent the sentiments and dispositions of the people of England, respecting either the late French Revolution, or our own Revolution in 1688, as Mr. Burke's "Reflections on the Revolution in France."

It is asserted by Mr. Burke, that the body of the people of England utterly disclaim, and will resist the practical assertion of "with their lives and fortunes," those principles, which Dr. Price has stated to be the principles of the Revolution; namely, that we have a right "to choose our own governors; to cashier them for misconduct; and to frame a government for ourselves *." But I am so fully convinced, that Mr. Burke's ideas upon this subject are totally ill founded, that if ever the sense of the inhabitants of this country should be taken upon the following ques-

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 20, 21.

tions,

tions, Whether all legitimate power is, or is not, derived from the people? Whether all those, who are invested with the powers of government, are accountable to the nation for their discharge of the offices entrusted to them? Whether the people have not a right to dethrone a king for tyranny? and, Whether the people and parliament of England have not also a right to adopt that mode of government, which they conceive to be most conducive to their own advantage? I have no doubt, but that these questions would be answered by the people of England in the affirmative, with a voice that should be heard to the most distant parts of the kingdom, and that no prince or minister would dare to contradict.

MR. BURKE says, that the present king
 “ holds his crown in contempt of the
 “ choice of the Revolution Society *.”

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 19.

But I hope, that he does not hold it in contempt of the people of England, or of their choice or approbation. Sir William Temple informs us, that Monf. Gourville, who had refided a confiderable time in England, and obferved much of the temper and difpofition of the people, faid to him at Bruffels, “ A King of England, who
 “ will be THE MAN OF HIS PEOPLE, is
 “ the greateft King in the World ; but,
 “ if he will be fomething more, by G—,
 “ HE IS NOTHING AT ALL *.” This fpeech Sir William reported to Charles II. becaufe he knew, he fays, that the king efteemed Monf. Gourville, as having “ the
 “ foundeft head of any Frenchman he had
 “ ever feen.” Thefe sentiments of Monf. Gourville’s, refpecting the kings of England, Charles did not, however, at firft, feem perfectly to relifh ; but, after a little confideration, he appeared to acquiefce in

* Temple’s Memoirs, part II. p. 33, 34. edit. 1700.

them ;

them ; and, if these sentiments could be acquiesced in, even apparently, by a prince of the house of Stuart, I hope no prince of the house of Hanover will forget, that his family derive their present dignity from the parliament and people of England, and that to secure and establish their rights was the design and the end of their elevation.

MR. BURKE appears extremely desirous to represent government as a science involved in very profound mysteries ; and, indeed, of all the theories of government which I have met with, that of Mr. Burke seems to be the most abstruse, and the most obscure. In support of such a mysterious representation of the nature of government, he says, that " The nature of man is intricate ; the objects of society are of the greatest possible complexity *." But,

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 91.

however

however intricate may be the nature of man, however complex the objects of human society, there are certain maxims and principles, respecting government, which are obvious to the most common understandings, whenever a due attention be paid to the subject. Among these maxims, the following may be enumerated, which I have stated, in a former publication, as the sentiments of Mr. Locke.

‘ That all legitimate government is derived from the consent of the people ; that
 ‘ men are naturally equal, and that no one
 ‘ has a right to injure another in his life,
 ‘ health, liberty, or possessions ; and that
 ‘ no man in civil society ought to be subject to the arbitrary will of others, but
 ‘ only to known and established laws, made
 ‘ by general consent, for the common benefit. That no taxes are to be levied on
 ‘ the people, without the consent of the
 ‘ majority, given by themselves, or by
 ‘ their

' their deputies. That the ruling power
 ' ought to govern by declared and received
 ' laws, and not by extemporary dictates,
 ' and undetermined resolutions. That
 ' kings and princes, magistrates and rulers
 ' of every class, have no just authority
 ' but what is delegated to them by the
 ' people ; and which, when not employed
 ' for their benefit, the people have always
 ' a right to resume, in whatever hands
 ' it may be placed *.' These principles
 of Mr. LOCKE are certainly much more
 perspicuous, than the account of the rights
 of men given by Mr. Burke †, and they
 are founded on unquestionable reason.

MR. BURKE observes, that ' If civil
 ' society be the offspring of convention,

* Vindication of the Political Principles of Mr. Locke,
 p. 96, 97.

† Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 87, 88,
 89.

' that

‘ that convention must be its law *.’ But allowing civil society to be the offspring of convention, if a civil convention had been made in any country, in the last century, or in two or ten centuries before, which was found to be injurious to the majority of the community, they would have an undoubted right to demand a new convention, and to settle such a form of civil society, and establish such laws, as should be more equitable, and more conducive to the general welfare. Mr. Burke also says, ‘ How can any man claim, under ‘ the conventions of civil society, rights ‘ which do not so much as suppose its ‘ existence †?’ To which it may be answered, that though every man may be obliged, so far as he can do it conscientiously, to comply with the particular conventions of that civil society in which he

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 87.

† Ibid. p. 88.

lives,

lives, while he continues in it, yet that is no reason whatever why the majority of that or any other society, if they have, or suppose they have, acquired more just ideas of the nature of government than were possessed by their ancestors, should not make such alterations in the original convention, or adopt any such new mode of government, as they may conceive to be best adapted to promote the common benefit. Nor does it follow, because a man in civil society is not, in a dispute with another, to be judge in his own cause *, that therefore the majority of the members of any civil community have not a right to establish a government for their own advantage.

BUT Mr. Burke likewise says, that ‘ as
 ‘ to the share of power, authority, and
 ‘ direction, which each individual ought

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 88.

‘ to have in the management of the state,
 ‘ that I must deny to be among the direct
 ‘ original rights of man in civil society *.’
 Certainly no individual man has a right to
 claim the office of magistrate, or minister of
 state, or other office of authority in the go-
 vernment ; but it must be an original right
 of men in civil society, to adopt those mea-
 sures that are most conducive to the welfare
 of the whole, and of consequence to ap-
 point such men to public offices, or to
 establish such a mode of government, as
 the majority shall judge best calculated to
 advance the general happiness.

THE RIGHTS OF MEN is a phrase to
 which Mr. Burke seems to have an ex-
 treme aversion, though it is, perhaps, one
 of those expressive phrases, which are not
 easily altered for the better. But notwith-
 standing his dislike to this expression, there

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 87.

are certainly natural rights, independently of all positive law or appointment. Mr. Burke, however, seems to have a much higher idea of the value and importance of property, than of those general rights to which all men have an equal claim. He appears to be of opinion, that property can never be too well secured, though he is far from having the same anxiety to secure the rights of human nature. But is not personal liberty as sacred a possession, as any species of property that we can inherit from our ancestors? Is not the right of the mechanic and the labourer to the profits of their labour, to the estimation of the value of their labour, or to the choice of the manner in which they will exercise their talents, as clear as the right to any other property? And yet these rights are often invaded by unjust and unequal laws, or by acts of power that receive the sanction of government. This is a subject into which I feel myself inclined to enter

upon a more full discussion ; but it would carry me beyond the limits which I have prescribed to myself in this publication.

MR. BURKE remarks, that ‘ the body of the community, whenever it can come to act, can meet with no effectual resistance ; but till power and right are the same, the whole body of them has no right inconsistent with virtue, and the first of all virtues, prudence *.’ Whether prudence be the first of all virtues, may reasonably be questioned ; it is always the first of all virtues with selfish men ; but I shall readily admit, that the body of the community, any more than private individuals, have no right to violate the rules of justice. It is, however, perfectly agreeable to the rules of virtue, and of justice, that the majority in any country, or of any community, should establish that

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 92.

mode of government, which they conceive to be best calculated to promote the general happiness; and this is all that is contended for by the advocates for the rights of men.

IN the course of his animadversions on Dr. Price's sermon, preached to the Revolution Society in 1789, Mr. Burke expresses an high degree of indignation against political sermons. ' Politics and ' the pulpit,' he says, ' are terms that have ' little agreement. No sound ought to be ' heard in the church but the healing voice ' of Christian charity.—Surely the church ' is a place where one day's truce ought to ' be allowed to the dissensions and animosities of mankind *.' Mr. Burke is mistaken in supposing, as it appears he does †, that the Revolution Society have regularly

* Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 14.

† Ibid. p. 4.

had annual sermons. Only two sermons have been preached to that society for many years past. Many sermons, however, are preached in the church of England against the Dissenters ; many of these sermons are printed ; and those who give themselves the trouble of perusing them will find, that, in general, they contain very little of " the healing voice of Christian charity." As to political sermons, it is an incontrovertible fact, that a much greater number of sermons of this kind are preached by clergymen of the church of England, than by any Dissenting ministers. In the sermons that are preached before the two houses of parliament, on the 30th of January, and the 29th of May, politics are, I believe, almost invariably introduced ; and this is also the case, on those days, in many other pulpits throughout the kingdom. It seems to have been the intention of the legislature, and of the governors of the church, that it should

should be so; for politics are even introduced into the prayers appointed for those days by public authority. Nor, indeed, is it easy, either for a clergyman of the church of England, or a Dissenting minister, to avoid entering upon politics, when the very purpose, for which their congregations are assembled, is the celebration of a political event; and if they were wholly to decline politics on such occasions, they would not give very general satisfaction to their auditors. But if archbishops, and bishops, and deans, and archdeacons, and inferior clergymen, employ themselves on the 30th of January, and the 29th of May, and on similar fasts and festivals, in inculcating the principles of passive obedience and non-resistance, or of a more moderate and limited Toryism, or, as in candour we must acknowledge is sometimes the case, in propagating political sentiments of a much better tendency, it cannot be an evil of great magnitude,

nitude, that some Dissenting ministers should occasionally employ themselves in explaining to their auditors the proper duties of men, as citizens, in a free country; if they should point out to them the true nature and design of government; and exhort them to a just zeal in support of those great principles of civil and religious liberty, which are essentially connected with the best interests of their country. Whatever censure such Dissenting ministers may incur, on occasions of this kind, from the servile flatterers of power, they will not be wholly destitute of approbation, or applause, from those who have a just sense of the dignity, and of the rights of human nature.

As Mr. Burke speaks in very honourable terms of the superior clergy of France, though he does not express himself quite so handsomely of those of the inferior order, so he also speaks in very high terms of
the

the advantages resulting to religion from the prelates of the church of England. He seems much delighted, that in this country, religion “exalts her mitred head “in courts and parliaments†;” and that the nation pays so much honour to “the “high magistrates of its church*.” It may, however, be remarked, that these “high magistrates of the church,” are a sort of people of whom we read nothing in the New Testament; and, indeed, Mr. Burke’s ideas of religion, in several respects, seem much better adapted to the church of Rome, than to the principles of any Protestant church in Europe. But Mr. Burke thinks that these dignified prelates, on account of their rank and riches, are the more likely to have their doctrines properly attended to by “the wealthy and “powerful of long standing.” I am, however, not very certain, that our nobility,

† Reflections, &c. p. 153.

* Ibid. p. 154.

and persons of rank and fortune, receive much of their religious instruction from the bishops. I suspect, that the information which they receive from the clergy, on the topics of religion and morality, is chiefly from those who are not decorated with mitres; and that the piety and virtue, manifested by our lay lords, is but a very small part of it derived, from the occasional sermons, or occasional pastoral conversation, of our right reverend prelates *. Nor will I take upon me to determine, how much the piety of the lay lords may have been increased, by observing the uniformity with which the generality of our right reverend prelates have voted, in former parliaments, in support of every measure of every minister for the time being, without diverting much of their attention from their theological studies, by any laborious inquiries into the rectitude of the measures which they supported.

SINCE

* Mr. Burke is inclined to make a most liberal provision for the bishops; for them he approves of such revenues

SINCE the Revolution in France, many of the most enlightened inhabitants of that kingdom have shewn a great desire to be on pacific terms with England, and have even appeared extremely sollicitous, that real friendship and harmony may subsist between the two nations. I sincerely wish, that these sentiments may be cordially cherished and cultivated on our part, and that perpetual peace and friendship may be established between Great Britain and France, and the general welfare and freedom of the human race promoted by their united efforts. An alliance between Great Britain, and a free country, as France now is, but little

revenues as those of Winchester, or Durham; but, in his theory of government, he does not make, at least in this world, a very comfortable provision for the poor. ‘ They must respect,’ he says, ‘ that property of *which they cannot partake*. They must labour to obtain what by labour can be obtained; and when they find, as they commonly do, *the success disproportioned to the endeavour*, they must be taught their consolation in THE FINAL PROPORTIONS OF ETERNAL JUSTICE.’ Reflections, &c. p. 351.

separated from us, must be much more honourable and advantageous, than an alliance with a German electorate, at a considerable distance from us, whose views are military and despotic, with which we have no common interests, and no natural connexion.

INSTANCES have recently occurred, of foreign powers interfering, in the internal disputes of other countries, in order to maintain the authority, or the despotic claims, of princes and sovereigns against their subjects. Such interpositions ought ever to be considered as flagrant violations of justice, and of the law of nations. No prince who requires any such interposition, in his own behalf, and against his subjects, can ever be worthy of assistance or support. In the present state of the world nothing can be more alarming, than combinations of powerful and military princes, to prevent the inhabitants of different countries

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from

from asserting their rights, improving their forms of government, and advancing human liberty, and human happiness. Such iniquitous interpositions may, however, possibly be termed, Preserving the Balance of Europe. But all liberty may be banished from the face of the globe, if the great tyrants of the earth are suffered to join together, to support each other in their different usurpations, and in their various oppressions of their subjects. Such combinations carry in them a very high degree of moral turpitude, and ought to meet with the most vigorous and determined opposition from all the sincere friends to the rights of mankind, and to the general interests of humanity.

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